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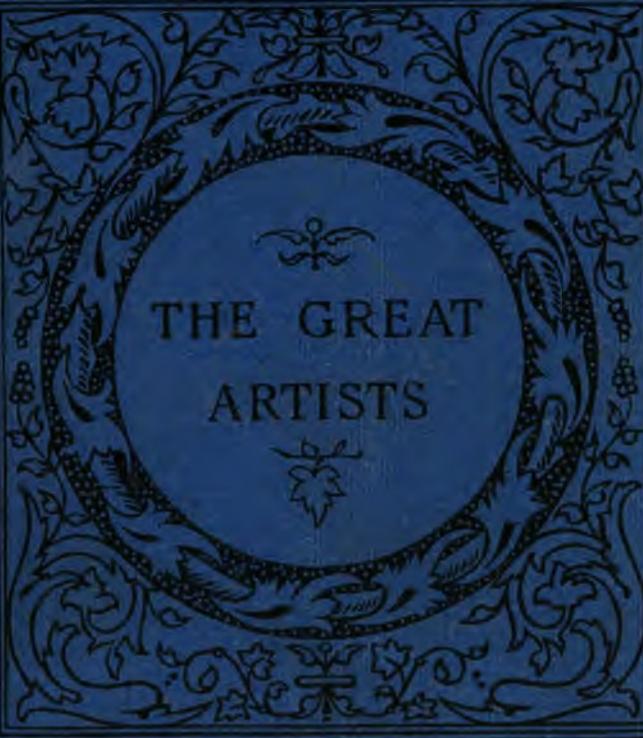
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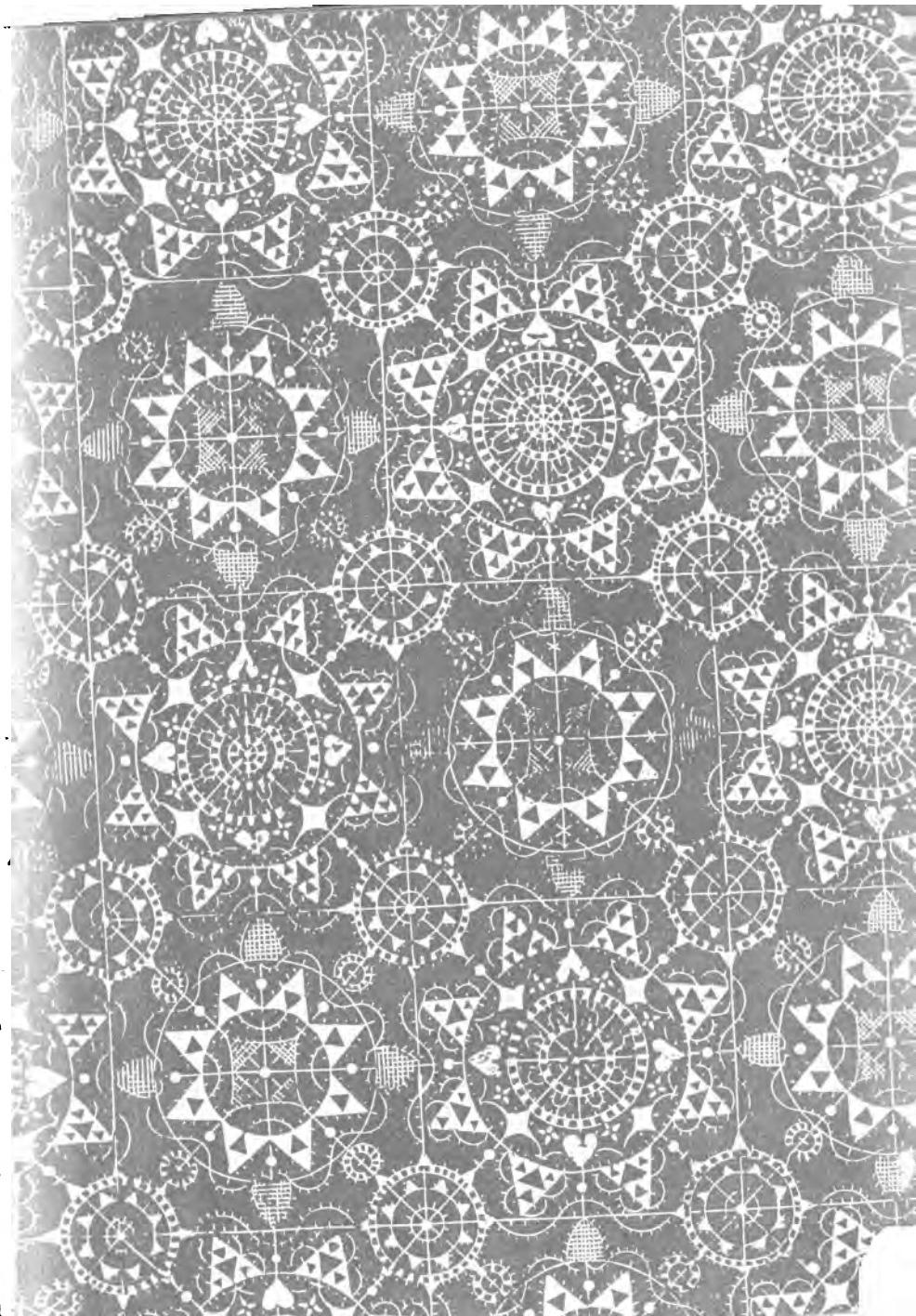
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PORTRAIT OF SIR DAVID WILKIE, R.A.

*"The whole world without Art would be one great wilderness."*

---

# SIR DAVID WILKIE

BY JOHN W. MOLLETT, B.A.  
OFFICIER DE L'INSTRUCTION PUBLIQUE  
(FRANCE)



LONDON  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON  
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## P R E F A C E.

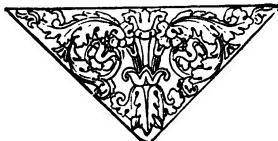
THE large work of Allan Cunningham contains almost all that need be said upon the Life of Wilkie, and has no doubt been the fountain-head from which the numerous compendious biographies of the great English painter, in dictionaries, albums, and books of engravings, &c., have been derived. Besides this work, other very interesting details of Wilkie's life are found in the autobiographies of his friends. He lived in an autobiographical age, and I have extracted from the lives of Haydon, Collins, Irving, Sir Walter Scott, Leslie, Raimbach, Thomas Moore, and others, many incidents for my purpose, and from the writings of Burnet, Redgrave, Waagen, Bulwer, Westmacott, Prince Hoare, and others, critical observations.

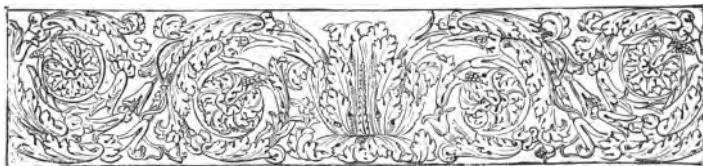
Wilkie's own critical remarks upon Art deserve a separate publication. To the untechnical reader they bring much comfort, not treating him as an outer barbarian, but recognising in his uninstructed sympathies a glimmering of an instinct deserving of respect. On the whole, Wilkie is the plain

man's friend; the emphasis that he always lays upon the pursuit of sentiment and expression is as congenial to the uninitiated layman as the kindly sympathies that his earlier works awaken; and his remarks upon the vagaries of certain schools of an art absorbed in its own intricacies are written in a language "understood of the people," to whom, rightly or wrongly, *he* seemed to think that it was the first excellence of a painter to appeal.

J. W. M.

*November, 1880.*





## CONTENTS.

### CHAPTER I.

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| BIRTH—EDUCATION—PITLESSIE FAIR. 1785—1804 . . . . . | 1    |

### CHAPTER II.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| ARRIVAL IN LONDON—STUDENT LIFE—FIRST SUCCESS—“THE VILLAGE POLITICIANS.” 1805 . . . . . | 14 |
|--|----|

### CHAPTER III.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| “THE BLIND FIDDLER”—“ALFRED IN THE NEATHERD’S COTTAGE”<br>—“THE RENT DAY”—“THE SICK LADY”—“THE JEW’S HARP”<br>—“THE CUT FINGER.” 1806—1809 . . . . . | 25 |
|--|----|

### CHAPTER IV.

|   |    |
|---|----|
| “BLINDMAN’S BUFF”—“THE PEDLAR”—“LETTER OF INTRODUCTION”—“DUNCAN GRAY”—JOURNEYS TO PARIS, THE NETHERLANDS, AND SCOTLAND. 1812—1815 . . . . . | 45 |
|---|----|

### CHAPTER V.

|   |    |
|---|----|
| “THE CHELSEA PENSIONERS”—“THE KING’S VISIT TO EDINBURGH”<br>—HAYDON IN PRISON—HUMOROUS CATALOGUE—MISFORTUNES<br>AND FAILURE OF HEALTH—FOREIGN TRAVEL. 1818—1827 . . | 60 |
|---|----|

### CHAPTER VI.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| VISIT TO SPAIN—RETURN HOME—“THE KING’S ENTRY INTO HOLYROOD”—“JOHN KNOX PREACHING”—ACADEMY PICTURES.<br>1827—1841 . . . . . | 80 |
|--|----|

### CHAPTER VII.

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| LAST JOURNEY AND DEATH . . . . . | 97 |
|----------------------------------|----|

---

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF WILKIE IN PUBLIC GALLERIES IN ENGLAND . . . . . | 106 |
|--|-----|

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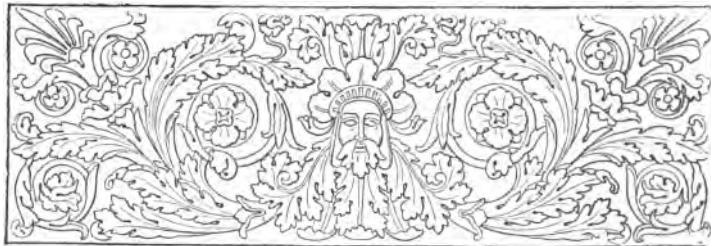
|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| INDEX . . . . . | 107 |
|-----------------|-----|

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

|  | PAGE                |
|--|---------------------|
| PORTRAIT OF SIR DAVID WILKIE . . . . .   | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| THE PEDLAR. . . . .  | 10                  |
| THE VILLAGE POLITICIANS . . . . .  | 24                  |
| GROUP FROM "THE RENT DAY." <i>From the Engraving by Raimbach</i> . . . . .           | 29                  |
| THE CUT FINGER . . . . .   | 32                  |
| THE JEWS' HARP . . . . .   | 36                  |
| GROUP FROM "BLIND MAN'S BUFF." <i>From the Engraving by Raimbach</i> . . . . .       | 46                  |
| GROUP FROM "THE PENNY WEDDING." <i>From the Engraving by James Stewart</i> . . . . . | 60                  |
| DUNCAN GRAY. <i>From the Engraving by F. Engleheart</i> . . . . .                    | 84                  |
| THE RABBIT ON THE WALL . . . . .   | 96                  |



# WILKIE.

## CHAPTER I.

1785 TO 1804.

BIRTH—EDUCATION—PITLESSIE FAIR.

DAVID WILKIE was born at the manse of the parish of Cults, on the banks of Eden water, in the county of Fife, on the 18th of November, 1785. In his own memoirs (quoted by Allan Cunningham) he says:—

“I am the third son of the Rev. David Wilkie and of Isabella Lister, his wife, a native of the district. My father came from the county of Midlothian, and from a neighbourhood often mentioned, which, like the ancient Hebron, had a halo and an interest about it which no other place could possess. He was a native of Ratho-Byres, a small property which had been in possession of our family for 400 years, until, as he used to tell us, by the imprudence of his ancestors, it had passed to a younger branch of the same family and name, and was held by his father, John Wilkie, only as its tenant and cultivator. Of the singular worth and good qualities of that excellent person, my grandfather, I have heard much, and from many persons. After his death the family mansion, an humble structure, was allowed to sink to decay; but from a feeling of respect to his own ancestry, the proprietor, James Wilkie of Gilchristown, permitted a gable-end, containing the chimney-corner where my grandfather loved to entertain his friends, to remain, which I remember a grey ruin, a venerable landmark of other years.”

W

B

"In the neighbourhood of Ratho," continues Sir David, "reside other families of my name: Matthew Wilkie of Bonnington, and William Wilkie of Ormiston Hill, extensive proprietors of land, are counted our relations, and claim descent from the same stock. With the Rev. John Wilkie of Uphall I wish I could count kindred as surely, for he had a mind superior to his time. It happened, in 1720, that a young man of a good family, in the parish of Mid-Calder, fell sick, and, as the wisest of the land differed about the nature of his complaint, he was believed, in the superstitious spirit of those times, to be witched. A poor old woman of the neighbourhood acknowledged that she had uttered a rash wish respecting him, and, as his disorder corresponded with her words, she in consequence acknowledged herself a witch. The family complained to the Presbytery, and the Presbytery desired John Wilkie to preach a sermon on the heinousness of witchcraft. His text was 'Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you!' The sermon, the fame of which still exists in the district, directed against superstitious beliefs and influences, removed the veil from many eyes. People wondered at their ignorance; and the old women of Mid-Calder were no longer believed, even on their word, to be witches.

"Of an equally enlightened and perhaps a finer spirit was the Reverend William Wilkie, minister of Ratho, author of *The Epigoniad*, a poem on the Theban war, which, in language though reminding us too much of Pope, almost his contemporary, exhibits such facility of composition, such readiness of imagery, and such power of expression, as induced Hume, the historian, to call him the Scottish Homer. Nor should his fables be forgotten by those who speak of his poetry, nor his love for the pursuits of agriculture, in which he excelled."

Here the memoir abruptly closes. His father's methodical record of his birth is the following:—

"1781. October 4.—Was this day married to Miss Isabella Lister, daughter to Mr. James Lister, farmer of Pitlessie Mill.

"1782. August 13.—This day, at half an hour before twelve o'clock, my dear wife was delivered of a son, who was baptized on the 25th and received the name of John, after my father.

"1784. July 3.—This day, about four o'clock in the morning, Bell was delivered of a son, who on the eleventh was baptized by the name of James, after her father."

The fourth entry introduces us to the great artist:

"1785. November 18.—This day, about five in the evening, Bell was delivered of a son who, on December 4th, was baptized by the name of David after myself."

The most remarkable characteristic of David Wilkie's life is the completeness of its dedication to art. Literally from the cradle to the grave he seems to have cared for nothing else; and to have been born with the conviction that the whole duty of man was the production of pictures.

He says of himself that he could "draw before he could read, and paint before he could spell;" and it is at a surprisingly early period of his life that he began scratching portraits of his friends on the floor and the walls of his nursery, the earliest of which is remembered as *Bonnie Lady Gonie*; and Professor Gillespie, who succeeded David's father in the incumbency of Cults, speaks of the regret with which he found that his whitewashers had smeared over a number of outlines and heads on the walls of the manse, the production of David in his infancy. Enough of these remained for him to describe them as portraits, "touched into the humorous," of persons who were visitors at the manse or who frequented the kirk, and they were drawn in chalk, charcoal, pencil, "keel," or ink. "His love of character," says the professor, "was with him a very early passion. A grey-headed beggar-man, a maimed soldier, a limping sailor, or a mendicant fiddler were quickly transferred into a little book which he carried continually in his pocket."

David was about six years old when he was sent to the village school at Pitlessie, about a mile from Cults. Of this period of his life Allan Cunningham says :—

"David was a silent though stirring child, and loved, when scarce escaped from his mother's bosom, to draw such figures as struck his young fancy, on the sand, by the stream side, on the smooth stones of the field, on the floors of the Manse: nor was it unobserved that most of these early scratchings had a leaning towards the *humorous and the absurd*.

"'I mind him well,' said, many years afterwards, one of his school-fellows at Pitlessie, 'and I mind his brothers too; but he was a quieter and kindlier lad than his elder brothers, and liked better to stand and look at his companions in their games than join in their play. I think I

see him now standing smiling, with his hands in his pouches ; ay ! but he liked best to lie 'a groufe on the ground, wi' his slate and pencil, making queer drawings.'

Indeed his principal occupation at school was the making of portraits of his school companions, which they bought from him for marbles or pencils, or such small barter.

Early in 1797 he left Pitlessie and went to Kettle school, about two miles further up the stream of the Eden. The master, Dr. Strachan (afterwards Bishop of Toronto), said that "Wilkie was the most singular scholar he ever attempted to teach, and although quiet and demure, he had an ear and an eye for all the idle mischief that was at hand." He was not more than fifteen or eighteen months at Kettle school. But here he developed a faculty for mechanical work, and with the help of a knife and chisel made models of mills and carriages ; he learned something of shoemaking, and of weaving, and showed an artist's appreciation of the peculiar position of a shoemaker, sitting knock-kneed while he jerks his thread, and the swinging movement of the weaver at his loom. In fact he exemplified at this early age the natural histrionic talent of the born painter.

During the years 1797 and 1798 when he was at Kettle school, he had a folio book into which he used to make such drawings as were favourites. Allan Cunningham says of this collection that, except in the choice of subject, these early sketches show but in a few instances much of the original genius of Wilkie. There is little of the ideal in them ; they are very various however, and are mostly from scenes and sights which had struck his youthful fancy in the land wherein he lived.

Among the pictures in this book, of which Cunningham gives a most interesting description are—a *Portrait of Himself*, "round-faced and somewhat chubby" ; a singular scene of a "wild wood and, amid rocks savage and splintery, a fire and

a pot hung over it ; and beside it on a stone sits a man, the sole tenant of the wilderness, who watches the flame climbing up the sides of the pot, and the smoke curling high in the air. He is unshorn and unshaven, and in faint letters may still be read, *The Hermit*, at the bottom of the page."

Others are landscapes representing the seasons, and the field-work and sports incidental to them, which are supposed to be copies from prints. Eighteen in all are described, of which the last is an interesting winter landscape—a flock of sheep reposing in a meadow under the shelter of a wood ; the sun is yet unrisen, snow has fallen during the night, and is yet unshaken from their backs ; in the neighbouring cottages the morning fires are kindled, and the smoke mounts curling into the air. "This," says Cunningham, "is a fine subject, and was to the last a favourite with Wilkie : it was taken from nature. He reckoned the snow on the backs of the sheep, which, compared with their fleeces, has a whiteness of his own, an original touch."

It was in the year 1799 that his father very reluctantly consented to the lad's final choice of a profession, and, like the prudent Scotchman that he was, at once set about the best means of promoting his success in it. Accordingly, at the age of fourteen, little David, armed with some feeble specimens of his skill, and an introductory letter in his pocket from the Earl of Leven to Mr. George Thomson, the secretary, presented himself a candidate for admission to the Trustees' Academy at Edinburgh. The drawings that he submitted to the secretary were not considered good enough to secure his admission, and it required the intervention of his powerful patron to overcome this difficulty. It is characteristic of Wilkie that his grateful recollection of this circumstance in later life is on record.

The Hon. William Leslie Melville, the son of Lord Leven, wrote of him :—

"I remember that my father, touched by the modest spirit of the boy, recommended him as a student to the Board of Trustees for the improvement of manufactures in Scotland, of which he was a member; but the drawings—a house and a tree—which young Wilkie submitted to George Thomson, the secretary, seemed to him so defective both in perspective and colouring, that he hesitated to admit him, and told my father that *the boy had entirely mistaken his talents*. One of my brothers wrote me as follows:—When Sir David was in Scotland in 1839, he came to Melville House; we have three little pictures from his hand of dogs and sheep; on showing them to him he said, 'That dog I copied from a print, the sheep I drew from nature. Some people at Cults had praised my drawings, and I remember quite well bringing them to the great house, and wondering as I came how I would be received. Your father was very kind; he praised my drawings, and afterwards helped me!'-I happened to be at home when he called with the drawings—it was after his admission to the Trustees Academy—and walking with him through the house, showed him what pictures there were, chiefly family portraits. I called afterwards on him at Cults manse and saw with other drawings some heads in a psalm book with a good deal of expression made, I fear, at church, from some of the congregation; these I think were introduced into his picture of *Pitlessie Fair*."

Of this part of his life a most satisfactory description is bequeathed to posterity by his enthusiastic admirer and fellow-student, John Burnet, the engraver, whose criticisms of Wilkie's method and genius are extremely valuable.

Wilkie was very fortunate in the period of his matriculation into this school, which before his time had been almost entirely devoted to industrial decoration; but John Graham, who presided in Wilkie's time, directed it to the fine arts, introduced painting in oil from the antique, and premiums for the best original pictures from history.

"When Wilkie came to our class," says Burnet, "he had much enthusiasm of a queer and silent kind, and very little knowledge of drawing; he had made drawings, it is true, from living nature in that wide academy the world, and chiefly from men or boys or such groups as chance threw in his way; but in that sort of drawing in which taste and knowledge are united, he was far behind others who without a tithe of his talent, stood in the same class. Though behind in skill, he however surpassed, and that from the first, all his companions in comprehending the character of

whatever he was set to draw. It was not enough for him, to say ‘Draw that antique foot, or draw this antique hand ;’ no, he required to know to what statue the foot or hand belonged, what was the action, and what the sentiment ! He soon felt that in the true antique the action and sentiment pervaded it from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, and that unless this was known, the fragment was not understood, and no right drawing of it could be made. When he knew the meaning, he then began, and not till then, to outline it in, studiously and slowly ; telling those who reproached him with being tardy, that the meanest figure in the humblest group in the works of every great artist had a meaning and a character.

“One of his earliest copies from the antique was a *Niobe’s Head* in red chalk ; but before this he had drawn a series of noses, eyes, and ears, and also a foot, which his father, now proud of his son’s progress, showed to some of the good people of Culz as the first of his studies. ‘And what is it, sir ?’ inquired the man of Fife ; tradition says he was one of the elders of Culz. ‘It is a foot,’ replied the minister. ‘A foot,’ exclaimed the elder in surprise, and taking a second look, ‘a foot ! it’s mair like a fluke (*i.e.* a flounder) than a foot !’ Perhaps it is of this drawing that Haydon says, ‘The foot is a good foot, awkwardly shaded, but correctly drawn ; and is now in my possession, the gift of Wilkie.’”

Another of his fellow students, Sir W. Allan, says that the progress Wilkie made at Edinburgh was marvellous. “Everything he attempted indicated a knowledge beyond his years ; and he soon took up that position in Art which he maintained to the last. He was always on the look-out for character : he frequented trystes, fairs, and market places.”

“He was always first on the stairs leading up to the Academy (which was then held in St. James’s Square), anxious not to lose a moment of the hours of drawing. . . .

“In the Academy his intensesness attracted the notice of the more volatile students, who used to pelt him with pills of soft bread. As he was one of the first to be present, so he was one of the last to depart. After Academy hours, which were from ten to twelve in the forenoon, those who were apprentices returned to their several professions ; but Wilkie invariably went back to his lodging, there to follow out what was begun in the Academy, by copying from his own hands and face in a mirror ; thus, as it were, engraving the great principles of the antique on the basis of nature.

“Wilkie’s drawings (studies of his own hands) are innumerable, and

many of them possess the character and grace of Raffaelle and Correggio. He generally made these studies in black and red chalk, heightened sometimes with white, such as we see in those of Watteau. I may observe (adds Burnet) that he could sketch with the left when drawing the right hand; and I have often observed, when using the same method, that the left-hand sketches possessed greater character, being less mannered in the handling.

"We were always lectured on the necessity of paying the greatest attention to the drawing of *hands*. Graham used to remind us that Michelangelo was great in defining the extremities. Wilkie's first essays in the antique school were from the *Niobe daughters*, the size of the originals in black and white, and his first pictures were *Diana and Calista* and *A Scene from Macbeth*; in both of which his clever observation of nature was apparent, however inappropriate to the higher walks of art; in the one the Calista was made to blush with so deep a colour in the ear and the upper part of the neck as gave Graham an opportunity (in deciding upon the merits of the several performances) for descanting on the difficulty of introducing the peculiarities of familiar life into the higher branches of the art.

"The *Scene from Macbeth* was that where the murderer sent by Macbeth to the house of Macduff meets with his wife and child—the wife, and indeed every other part was common-place, except the expression of the boy, who boldly answers their questions—this was excellent, and Graham predicted that he would one day arrive at eminence, from his strong delineation of nature, a prediction which he found verified, when a print from his picture of *The Jew's Harp* was sent him, which he carried into the academy to show the students, and to say how proud he felt in educating such a pupil."

With reference to the *Macbeth* subject we find in the biography of Allan Cunningham the following interesting particulars:—

"When Allan left the Trustees Academy Burnet, Thomson, and Wilkie were regarded as the ablest of the scholars of Graham; the first for quickness of perception and dexterity of hand; the second for what was called historical loftiness; and the third and last for original observation.

"When the master announced that he had prevailed on the Trustees not only to allow studies in oil to be painted from historic or poetic subjects but to grant small premiums for the best paintings—the subject was left to be found by each competitor in the tragedy of *Macbeth*. Burnet chose the witch scene, with the sinking of the caldron. Thomson the murder

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*See page 46.*

THE PEDLAR. BY DAVID WILKIE.

*Painted in 1813 for Dr. Baillie.*

of Banquo in the forest, and Wilkie the murder of the children of Macduff.

"The prize was awarded to Thomson, who was the brother of the secretary, but Wilkie never imputed injustice to George Thomson, but spoke of him with kindness and even affection in the days of his fame.

"It is not known what other subjects were set for competition during Wilkie's stay at the academy, but it is reasonable to assume that they were severely classical in the taste of the times. It was left for the boy who was studying as earnestly in the Grassmarket or the High Street as in the academy, to open the eyes of his countrymen to the picturesque poetry at their doors. 'The master,' says Cunningham, 'with whom the choice of a subject remained, never imagined that in the domestic or lyric poetry of Scotland the painter would find matter sufficiently lofty for his pencil; and overlooking a series of songs which for graphic truth, ease, and life, pastoral sweetness and rural glee, have no parallel in modern composition, travelled into classic times, and sought among the exhausted masters of heathen song and fable for themes for his scholars.'

"Wilkie seems now and then, even in his probation days, to have been about to lift the veil from that series of beautiful pictures which visited his thoughts and appeared as it were in vision before him."

"He had no other pursuit of either pleasure or subsistence to divide his thoughts. He was watchful in his expenditure and careful in his choice of companions. He loved to wander in his leisure hours about the streets and squares, observing the masons at their daily toil, carmen with their teams, and the groups which crowded the Grassmarket or the High Street bringing with them that air of the country by which the people of the vale and hill are distinguished from those of the city. He made *Nature* his Ostade and his Teniers; and *Carée*, with his fine tone of colour his Rembrandt and Jan Steen."

Whilst studying at the Trustees Academy he made progress in portrait-painting, beginning with small, and gradually expanding them as confidence and skill increased, till he reached the size of life. Of the miniature size many portraits still exist, some in pencil, others in oil, and some in water

colours ; the smallest are the best, especially a miniature of his brother Thomas (then in a merchant's office at Leith), which he painted at Nicolson Street in 1803.

In his seventeenth year he painted a small picture from *The Gentle Shepherd*, illustrating the scene where Sir William returning from exile in the disguise of a seer or spaeman finds his only son, who had been for safety educated in ignorance of his birth, dancing in a group of rustics, and offers to tell his fortune. Patie's incredulous look, the wonder of Elsa, the tranquil sagacity of Symon, and the half-believing glance of Claud, and the "plump ripe" lasses, are all depicted in truth of character and glowing colours.

Another picture of student days is *Douglas and the Hermit*, from the tragedy of Home ; young Douglas telling his mother how he learned the art of war. "The melancholy hermit, the shaggy cave, and the enthusiastic listener are well delineated." <sup>1</sup>

Wilkie left the Academy in 1804, and returned to Cults. On this occasion his master wrote to the Rev. David Wilkie of his son's studies :—

"I have seen some doubts expressed by the critics whether his talents were equal to the higher line of art. They know him not. He is capable of carrying through the most elevated and elegant part of his art, perhaps with as much success as those subjects from which he has merited so much praise. The more delicacy required in the execution of a subject, the more successful he will be.

<sup>1</sup> *Douglas* :—

" Pleased with my admiration, and the fire  
 His speech struck from me, the old man would shake  
 His years away, and act his young encounters ;  
 Then, having showed his wounds, he'd sit him down,  
 And all the livelong day discourse of war.  
 To help my fancy—on the smooth green turf  
 He'd cut the figures of the marshalled hosts,  
 Describe the motions and explain the use  
 Of the deep column and the lengthened line,  
 The square, the crescent, and the phalanx firm."

"In some of his first essays in painting when with me, he then evinced a degree of taste which bore a great resemblance to the manner of Correggio, who ranks amongst the highest masters of the art."

When David returned to the manse upon the termination of his studies at the Trustees School, he set up a chest of drawers for an easel, and upon them a canvas of twenty-five inches high and forty-four wide, being the largest he had ever used, and collected all portraits and sketches that he had for the composition of his first large picture.

It was after considerable hesitation that he selected his subject, being divided in his choice between *The Country Fair* and *A Field Preaching*. Ultimately a feeling for the reverence with which religious gatherings were regarded by his people determined him upon the choice of *Pitlessie Fair*.

In August 1804, he writes, "I have now fairly begun *The Country Fair*. I have the advantage of our herd boy and some children who live about the place, as standers, and I now see how superior painting from nature is to anything that our imagination, assisted by our memory, can conceive."

He writes again in December 1804, "I have not got the *Fair* finished yet, but it is pretty well on, and people of all ranks are coming to see it."

He did not call it *Pitlessie Fair* at first, for fear of offending his models. His father too was scandalised at being introduced talking to a publican, but it was suggested that he was warning the man of the sinful character of his calling.

Among the sketches for this picture were a remarkable series representing all the different stages of drowsiness and sleep, but as Cunningham says, "the artist avoided (in the picture) the allurements of humour such as this; nor did he, save in one or two groups, stumble into the dirty Dutch path to reputation, and wallow in a mire unworthy of being painted." Of the incidents represented in it, many were

afterwards worked up into separate works such as his *Blind Fiddler*, *Jew's Harp*, and others.

Among the portraits are the father and grandfather of Wilkie, and his sister, his sister-in-law and himself. While painting this picture he received, as a present from the Rev. Dr. Martin, of Monimail, two lay figures, the first he had ever seen, and he writes a naive letter describing the uses of them. He says, "I am coming much quicker on with the *Fair*, since I got these figures, for which I cannot enough thank the generosity of Dr. Martin."

The same letter contains an order for a supply of ivory for his other work of miniature painting. Cunningham gives a list of four or five miniatures which he produced at this time, and of a half-dozen of life-sized portraits, besides a number of so-called conversation pieces, of which the most interesting he describes represents the father and mother of Wilkie seated with serene and devout looks, meditating on the Sacrament of which they are to be partakers on the morrow.

To this period belongs also the picture (formerly in the collection of the late Mr. Wynn Ellis) called the *Bounty Money; or, The Village Recruit*, which Wilkie took up with him to London, and sold there. Cunningham enumerates a number of other drawings and sketches of earlier times, in Fife, but says that many were destroyed by the artist's orders when the family removed to London after the death of his father.

In 1812, Wilkie wrote, "The picture of the *Country Fair* I saw when I was last in Scotland, and although it is no doubt very badly painted, it has more subject and more entertainment than any other three pictures I have since produced."

In the meantime the whole country-side rang with the fame of this wonderful picture, and an old woman *spae'd*

that as there had been a Sir David Lindsay in poetry, there would be a Sir David Wilkie in painting, and that she should live to see it. And so it happened. Haydon says of this picture, "He showed me his wonderful picture of the Fair, painted at nineteen, *before he had ever seen a Teniers*. The colour was bad, but the grouping beautiful, and the figures full of expression." "But at the time," says Haydon, "I was too big with high art to feel its perfections, and perhaps had a feeling akin to contempt for a young man with any talent who stooped to such things."

When he had finished *Pitlessie Fair*, and had exhausted all the sitters of Culter and Cupar, Wilkie went on a tour and stayed a time, first in Kinghorn, and next in St. Andrews. He even went as far as Aberdeen, but found very few sitters, and could get neither colours nor brushes, nor canvas nor ivory. He returned home with the resolution of going to London, to study at the Royal Academy, and in spite of some dissuasion from his parents, having sold *Pitlessie Fair* for 25*l.* —he sailed in a Leith packet-boat for London, on the 20th May, 1805, when nineteen years and six months of age.



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## CHAPTER II.

1805—~~ET.~~ 19.

ARRIVAL IN LONDON—STUDENT LIFE—FIRST SUCCESS—“THE  
VILLAGE POLITICIANS.”

ON Wilkie's arrival in town he found lodgings in the front parlour of a coal merchant's house, at No. 8 Norton Street, Portland Road.

The Academy classes at Somerset House were at this time closed for the annual exhibition, so that David was unable to begin his studies as a probationer until the exhibition closed in July. His first business was to have the picture he had brought with him exposed for sale, which was done at a shop near Charing Cross. The picture in question, *The Village Recruit*, was ultimately sold for six pounds.

His next impulse was to the Exhibition, and an interesting account of his visit and his verdict on some of the exhibitors in the Academy is contained in a letter to his fellow student, MacDonald, written on the 15th July, 1805 :—

“ Amongst the first things that I did after landing here, I went to see the exhibition at Somerset House, with which I was very much amused ; there were pictures of all descriptions, some good and some bad ; but I understand this year's exhibition comparatively was a very poor one, which always will be considered so when the principal pictures are portraits. Opie, Hoppner, and Lawrence, seem to be the principal painters in that line : though Opie gives great force, yet he is surely a dirty painter. The

only great historical picture in it, and the one that attracted most notice, was a picture by West of *Thetis bringing armour to Achilles*, which was certainly a very grand design ; but I did not like it as well as some of Mr. West's that I have since seen."

The remainder of the same letter is interesting, and introduces us to some eminent contemporaries :—

" Since I came to town," he says, " I have conversed with some of the first artists in the kingdom. I have been introduced to Flaxman, Nollekens, Fuseli, and West. Mr. Flaxman is the best modeller we have. I was introduced to him by a letter that I brought from Scotland, and he introduced me to Mr. Fuseli,<sup>1</sup> who is the professor of painting in the Academy, and a very kind good sort of man he is. He questioned me about our artists in Edinburgh—inquired if Graham painted any. He had heard of the fame of Raeburn ; he admired the works of the celebrated Runciman, and asked if I had ever seen his Ossian's Hall at Pennyquick ; he also inquired about David Allan, and, for all his bad drawing, allowed him a very considerable degree of merit.

" A friend of mine, who is a very great connoisseur, took me to Mr. West's house, where we found that celebrated artist engaged in painting a picture ; but how much was I astonished at his wonderful works, which, for grandeur of design, clearness of colouring, and correct outline, surpass any modern pictures I have yet seen ; his figures have no doubt a flatness about them ; but, with all his faults, we have not a painter that can draw like him.

" I have been seeing a gallery of pictures by Morland which please me very much indeed. He seems to have copied nature in everything, and in a manner peculiar to himself. When you look at his pictures you see in them the very same figures that we see here every day in the streets, which, from the variety and looseness in their dress, form an appearance that is truly picturesque, and much superior to our peasantry in Scotland.

" I have also seen some pictures by Teniers, which, for clear touching, certainly go to the height of human perfection in art ; they make all other pictures look misty beside them.

" As for Turner, I do not at all understand his method of painting ; his designs are grand, the effect and colouring natural, but his manner of handling is not to my taste, and although his pictures are not large, you must see them from the other end of the room before they can satisfy the eye."

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<sup>1</sup> Fuseli took his place as keeper of the Royal Academy in 1805, after the Christmas vacation.

In the above interesting extract we have a certain measure of Wilkie's appreciation and tendency at the age of nineteen, which may be called his first, or Edinburgh period — the period of the *Pilgrim Fair*, and *The Recruit*.

When the Academy opened, Wilkie, who had gained admission as a probationer by means of a drawing from the *Niobe*, took his seat with his class.

Jackson wrote to Haydon—"There is a raw, tall, pale, queer Scotchman come, an odd fellow, but there is something in him."

"The next day," says Haydon, "I went to draw, but Wilkie was not there. An hour after, he came. He was tall, pale, quiet, with a fine eye, short nose, vulgar, humorous mouth, but with great energy of expression.

"After drawing a little he rose up, looked over me, and sat down. I rose up, looked over him, and sat down. Nothing further passed this day, our first together. Wilkie was very talkative to those near him, but in a whisper. The next day I brought the book of anatomical studies which I had done in Devonshire. The students crowded round me, but Wilkie was not there. The next day, however, he came, asked me a question, which I answered, and then we began to talk, to argue, to disagree, and went away and dined together."

It is about this time that Wilkie writes to a Scotch friend :—

"I have got acquainted with some of the students, who seem to know a good deal of the cant of criticism, and are very seldom disposed to allow anything merit that is not two hundred years old."

With reference to the instruction during Wilkie's days of probation and studentship Leslie says :—

"Under Fuseli's wise neglect, Wilkie, Mulready, Etty, Landseer, and Haydon distinguished themselves, and were the better for not being made all alike by teaching."

Haydon, however, had a horror of Fuseli, mixed with a strange admiration. "Beware of Fuseli" was in everybody's mouth. He says :—

"I adored Fuseli's inventive imagination and saw his mannered style. In conveying his conception he had all the ethereal part of a genius, but not enough of the earthy, to express his ideas in a natural way. Evil was in

him ; he knew full well that he was wrong as to truth of imitation, and he kept palliating it under the excuse of the grand style.' 'He had a strong Swiss accent and a guttural, energetic diction. He swore roundly. He was about five feet five inches high, had a compact little form, stood firmly at his easel, painted with his left hand, &c. Sometimes in his blindness he would put a hideous smear of prussian blue in his flesh, and then perhaps, discovering his mistake, take a bit of red to deaden it, and then, prying close in, turn round to me and say "By Gode, dat's a fine purple It's vary like Correggio, by Gode !" And then, all of a sudden, he would burst out with a quotation from Homer, Tasso, Dante, Ovid, Virgil, or perhaps the *Nibelungen*, and thunder round to me with "Paint dat !" I found him the most grotesque mixture of literature, art, scepticism, indelicacy, profanity, and kindness !'"

Wilkie's opinion of his teacher is not upon record.

Fuseli's opinion of Wilkie, recorded in his biography by J. Knowles, was "that he had most of the qualities of the best painters of the Dutch school." An anecdote in the same page has nothing to do with our subject, but is too good to lose as an illustration of Fuseli's manner. When Northcote's picture of *Balaam and the Ass* was exhibited at the Macklin Gallery, Northcote asked Fuseli's opinion of its merits, who instantly said, " My dear friend, you are an angel at an ass, but an ass at an angel."

" Wilkie's peculiar genius showed itself one day," says Haydon, "when I was eagerly drawing the skeleton. The oddity of the skeleton with its eyeless eyes and bare bones, and my earnest expression formed such a contrast that Wilkie, instead of making his study at the same time, struck with the humour of my position and look, sketched it into his anatomical book, and laughed long and loudly over his successful caricature."

It was about Christmas, 1805, that "a Scotchman, Charles Bell," came to town, and got up a course of lectures on anatomy, "which I am convinced," says Wilkie, "will be of great service to me," "for which," says Haydon, "we beat up sixteen pupils at two guineas each." "Bell had great

delight in the subject and was as eager as ourselves. Poor and anxious for reputation, he was industrious and did his best. He had studied and fully understood the application of anatomy to the purposes we wanted. His lectures were, in fact, his subsequent book, *The Anatomy of Expression*, for which Wilkie made several of the drawings. A miniature painter, Saunders, drew the *Laughing Head*. Wilkie's best was, I think, *Terror with the Hands up*.<sup>1</sup>

Though Wilkie drew at the Academy with spirit, it was in a style of smartness, says Haydon, so full of what are called spirited touches, that it could not be recommended for imitation to students. This style belonged to him and originated with him. It was like the painting of Teniers.

All Wilkie's letters home of this date are full of interest, describing in a simple graphic style the details of his life and work. He used to dine with Haydon and Jackson, at an ordinary in Poland Street, for thirteen pence a head, which, he says, "I am sure is as cheap as any person can have such a dinner in any part of Great Britain. Besides, we have the advantage of hearing all the languages of Europe talked with the greatest fluency, the place being mostly frequented by foreigners; indeed it is a very rare thing to see an Englishman; while there are Corsicans, Italians, French, Germans, Welsh and Scotch." His restless eye found character in this

<sup>1</sup> There is no acknowledgment whatever of this in the preface to the edition of 1806, in which Sir Charles only says, "He often found it necessary to take the aid of the pencil in slight marginal illustrations, in order to express what he despaired of making intelligible by the use of language merely; as in speaking for example of the forms of the head, or the operation of the muscles." In a footnote he says, "In the sketch of *Astonishment and Fear*, the author thought that he was successful in the expression, but they have lost much of their original character. It would be ungrateful not to acknowledge that he is indebted for some of the happier imitations of his drawing to Mr. Freeman's unremitting attention and solicitude."

But not a word of Wilkie or the miniature painter, Saunders, mentioned in Haydon's account.

mixed group of nationalities, and one old gentleman, who, when dinner was done, buried his face in the newspaper oblivious of all the company, figures in the *Village Politicians*. But news of the battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson might justify excitement.

It was in September, 1805, that Wilkie called upon Mr. Stodart, the "grand pianoforte maker to the Royal Family," to make preliminary inquiries for the purchase of an instrument for his sister Helen. He writes an account of it home:—

"I inquired of him if he had any small pianofortes by him, which he said he sometimes had, and that he could get second-hand ones as low as eight or ten pounds, but these he could not recommend; however, if I chose to go the length of twenty pounds, I might get a very good second-hand one, with additional keys. But he thought we should rather go the length of a new one, which he could get for twenty-three pounds, which would cost us in a shop thirty pounds; but if it was known that Helen was to have an instrument of that value, it might excite envy through the whole country side."

Stodart was married to "a Wilkie," and introduced David to the Earl of Mansfield. He also sat for his own portrait, which, said David, afterwards, "I have finished with some degree of success, and he has promised to use his influence among his friends, who I hope will follow his example; for *I have experienced before that such a thing as that needs but a beginning.*"

This letter is full of hope; Mr. Stodart, besides having his portrait made, had taken a fancy to "two pictures I am doing at present, which he says he will purchase upon certain terms; so that you may tell Helen there are some hopes of her getting a pianoforte still."

At the same time the father in Scotland is suggesting to his son—

"As you mention your wish to continue in London during the most part of the winter, and have some hopes of success in your line, I have had it in

my mind for some time of applying to Lord Crawford for the loan of a few pounds—fifteen or twenty—which if he lends, I would transmit to you in case you found that such assistance was necessary to continue you in London for a certain time,” &c.; but David writes back, “I would not like that so well, if I can avoid it; although he might be a better man to be indebted to than any other, yet I would have recourse to that remedy only in the last extreme, for I think I have spent enough of my own country’s money here already. However, in case it should be necessary, I will let you know; in the meantime, I have still eight pounds remaining, which will allow me time to think about it. . . . Among the many ways by which we try here to save expense, is that of cleaning our own boots and shoes; for you must know that the people of the house will not clean them, and when they send them out to the shoeblocks in the street they become expensive. To remedy this,” says David, “I have got both blacking and brushes, and clean them every morning myself.”

In December of this year, 1805, Wilkie passed from the condition of a probationer at the Academy to that of a student. He had, as a probationer, attended the lectures on perspective and anatomy, and prepared in the meantime the drawings requisite to admit him to the privileges of the “Life School.”

His work must have been continuous all this time with his studies at the Academy, his portrait-painting for Mr. Stodart and others, and his preliminary work towards the great pictures that he had in his mind. In addition to all this, Haydon says that during the autumn, Wilkie, “glad of any employment,” had entered into an engagement with an engraver to copy Barry’s pictures at the Adelphi. These were the twelve allegorical subjects in the great room of the Society of Arts.

Barry is described as “defective both in colouring and drawing,” yet he estimated his own powers so highly that he discontinued portrait-painting, and when applied to for that purpose, he usually told the applicant to “go to the fellow in Leicester Square” (meaning Sir Joshua Reynolds). Wilkie, however, seems to have conceived a high opinion of

Barry's works, even before he had had an opportunity of seeing them. He says in an early letter from London, "I have not seen any of Barry's pictures yet, though by all accounts he must be a wonderful man. Peter Pindar says he is the first painter of the English School!"

It is on the occasion of Barry's death in 1806 when Wilkie got tickets for the ceremonial of his lying in state, that he borrowed from Haydon a black coat which fitted him ridiculously—and says Haydon "in May, 1840, after the lapse of thirty-four years we remembered it again and laughed our laugh as of old, though I fear Sir David did not relish the recollection so much as formerly."

At this time, Wilkie was busy with his picture of the *Village Politicians*. Burnet remembers his bringing to the Academy in Edinburgh, his *first study*, which "caused a great sensation among the students, and called forth the commendation of Mr. Graham." It differs very materially from the work which established his fame in London. Burnet recognised in it many characters to be met with in the vicinity of Edinburgh, "which," he says, "struck me as a peculiarity in him, that while we were imitating the characters and mode of drawing to be seen in the works of Westall, Morland, and Julius Ibbetson, he was dodging and watching the natural incidents of the peasantry."

When the *Village Politicians* was all but finished, about March, 1806, Jackson, who considered it "quite equal to Teniers in handling, and superior in the telling of the story," was present with Sir George Beaumont and Lord Mulgrave when they were praising the Dutch School, and said "he would find them a young Scotsman who was second to no Dutchman that ever bore a palette on his thumb."

"They sent Jackson away to bring the picture down to Harley Street," says Haydon, "but Wilkie was out, and so Lord Mulgrave and Sir George called the next day, saw the picture, and were so electrified with it that

they each gave him a commission, one for the *Blind Fiddler*, the other for the *Rent Day*. Wilkie was now up in high life, and if a young man wanted to be puffed at dinners until Academicians were black in the face, Lord Mulgrave and Sir George were the men. Sir George described Wilkie as ‘a young man who came to London, saw a picture of Teniers, and at once painted the *Village Politicians!*’ At once! my dear Lady Mulgrave. At once! and off they all crowded to the little parlour of No. 8, Norton Street, to see the picture painted by the young Scotchman, who never painted a picture or saw one until the morning when he saw the Teniers, and then rushed home and produced the *Politicians!*”

In spite of all flattery the picture was sent in to the Academy with reluctance, for such was Wilkie’s timidity and modesty that he really did not seem to believe in its merit. Jackson reported that he had remained late at night endeavouring to persuade Wilkie to send his picture in, and he had not fully consented when Jackson took his leave. So late as the 15th of April there is a letter to his father which shows that he was encouraged, but not yet overmuch elated by his success. He had now found out that at Edinburgh he had spent much of his time in a manner doing nothing! and he tells his father that he has been for a long time very undecided whether to return to Scotland or not.

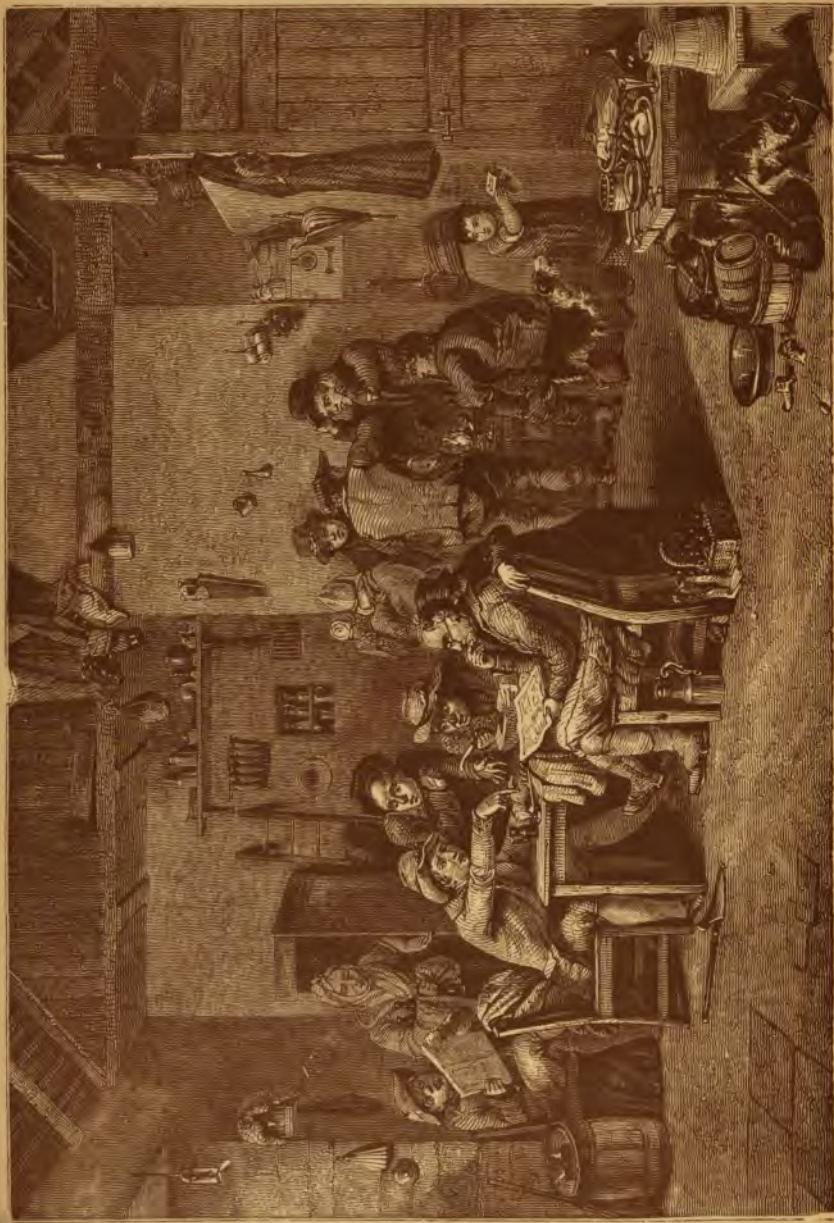
“I have painted a good many portraits since I came here; but in that I have been very unsuccessful for I have not been able to keep myself, and am at present twenty pounds in debt!” (In a previous letter he lamented “since I came to London, which is not near a twelvemonth I have spent near 100*l*!”) “I would (the letter continues) from this circumstance, not have hesitated a moment in returning to Scotland! but I have at present such golden prospects spread before me that I cannot resist the temptation of remaining still in London. I have been of late painting a picture for the Earl of Mansfield, to be exhibited in the Royal Academy, which has attracted considerable attention among my friends and acquaintances, and even drawn noblemen to my lodgings; one of whom is a gentleman that acted a considerable part in the late administration, viz. Lord Mulgrave, who seemed so much pleased with it, that not only he but a friend of his, Sir George Beaumont, have engaged me to paint two such pictures for them.”

Lord Mansfield had at one time seen in Wilkie’s studio the

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*See page 24.*

THE VILLAGE POLITICIANS. BY DAVID WILKIE. PAINTED IN 1806.



studies for the *Village Politicians*, and asked Wilkie to name the price of the picture, and he had answered ("timid and trembling," says Haydon) fifteen guineas. The Earl only advised Wilkie to consult his friends, and so the question of price was left in abeyance. But when the success of the picture had become notorious, and everybody was praising it, Lord Mansfield claimed his bargain, and offered to pay the fifteen guineas for the picture. But Wilkie had in the meantime had much larger offers, and had consulted his friends. Haydon's advice, for one, was plain, "Fifteen guineas! I said when I heard it; a hundred and fifty guineas is not too much. Don't you let him have it, my dear Wilkie."

After some unpleasant correspondence the price was fixed at thirty guineas—Wilkie in the meantime had been twice offered a hundred.

The question was, however, still unsettled when the picture was sent in to the Academy. The Academicians were so delighted, says Haydon, that they hung it on the chimney, the best place for a fine picture. On the private day there was a crowd about it, and at the dinner Angerstein took the Prince up to see it. Then came the reviews of the critics in the newspapers. On the Sunday, the next day, Haydon read in the *News*, "a young man by the name of Wilkie, a Scotchman, has a very extraordinary work." "I was in the clouds," he cries, "hurried over my breakfast, rushed away, met Jackson, who joined me, and we both bolted into Wilkie's room. I roared out, 'Wilkie, my boy, your name's in the paper!' 'Is it rea-al-ly,' said David. I read the puff—we huzzaed, and taking hands all three danced round the table until we were tired." Next day the friends went arm-in-arm to the Gallery. There was no getting near the picture, "sideways or edgeways." Wilkie, pale as death, kept saying: "Dear, dear, it's jest wonderful!"

His father writes to him of the accounts in the Scotch

prints, and the congratulations he had received from friends ; “in particular the gentlemen for whom you painted pictures last year, affirm that each of them is worth an hundred guineas.”

The *Gentleman's Magazine* for May, 1806, contains the following :—

“It will be observed with pleasure that the young artists have made a most sensible progress in the present exhibition, and that we have beams of genius that promise a bright day for the arts in England. Sir George Beaumont has contributed some beautiful landscapes, particularly the *Thorn* from Lyrical Ballads. Mr. Wilkie a young artist has astonished the academy with a beautiful little subject entitled *Village Politicians* in the style of Teniers, and most highly finished. Mr. Dubost, another new artist, a Frenchman, has peculiar merit, and rises above every one of his countrymen whom we have seen here.”

The above being the whole of the annual critique upon the exhibition is sufficient to show how completely Wilkie's work was the great incident of the year.

Another contemporary critique on the *Village Politicians*, says :—

“The interior of a country ale-house, and the general effect of the whole, are in the finest style ; and lead us to rejoice at the appearance of so promising an artist, said to be not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age. We do not know him, but we sincerely congratulate him on his first essay, which gives every promise of the painter being destined to rank very high in his profession, and that in a very short time.”



### CHAPTER III.

1806 TO 1809. AET. 19 TO 22.

"THE BLIND FIDDLER"—"ALFRED IN THE NEATHERD'S COTTAGE"—"THE RENT DAY"—"THE SICK LADY"—"THE JEW'S HARP"—"THE CUT FINGER."

"I am now redoubling my application with the sure hope of success. My ambition is got beyond all bounds, and I have the vanity to hope that Scotland will one day be proud to boast of your affectionate son,

"D. W.'

**S**O in the following month he laid open his heart to his father. His want of success in portrait-painting, he tells his brother, made him apply to another branch, "in which I have established a reputation that will live for ages."

In the meantime his picture made a deep impression upon public opinion, and it is obvious that, apart from its merits as a work of art, the subject of it was calculated to do this, at a time when the doctrines of the French Revolution were disturbing all classes of society, and raising up bands of eager politicians in every country village, and the scene represented in the picture was nightly enacted by "the village politicians" of a thousand ale-houses throughout the country.

"The season has now ended," writes Haydon in September, "and among the other fashionable departures Wilkie and

Jackson went to Mulgrave Castle to meet Sir George and a party, to paint and spend their time delightfully."

The subject of the *Blind Fiddler* was already one of the incidents in *Pitlessie Fair*, the hands of all the figures in action are said by John Burnet to be from Wilkie's own, as is also the expression of the heads: in fact he says the girl leaning over the back of the chair is very like what Wilkie himself was at that time. The other heads, says Burnet, were painted at once from the model, and exhibit more of Teniers's sharpness of touch (the master he had in his eye at this time). Sir George Beaumont had given him a very fine specimen of Teniers, which used to be on his easel during the progress of this picture. The *Blind Fiddler* is regarded by Burnet as the representative of Wilkie's first method, which resembled most closely that of Teniers, the characteristics of which are "sharpness and form, purity and cleanliness of tint, and dexterity in handling." This manner is distinguished from that of Van Ostade's works, in which, says Burnet, we observe a richness of tone, acquired by repeated glazings, and a roundness and melting of the outline, producing a luminous richness and fulness of effect.

Into these qualities of Van Ostade we shall see that Wilkie grew at a later period. The *Blind Fiddler* is, however, regarded as the representative picture of his manner when he worked most nearly in the style of Teniers. It is not necessary to be skilled in art criticism in order to feel the *action* of this composition, the broad-shouldered man making uncouth love to the infant, and the whole life of the group marking time with the fiddler's foot. Wilkie's inevitable dog is in this picture, and will be seen in many others to come.

The *Blind Fiddler* was exhibited in 1807. Wilkie's friends used to say that this picture, which is considered by some

critics deficient in colour, was purposely placed between two brilliantly coloured paintings, as if "to throw the poor Fiddler into still deeper shade." But as Mrs. Heaton says—

"If such were the design, it certainly missed its aim. *Jupiter presented to Diana her bow and arrows*, without any witnesses to his politeness, and *Flora unveiled by the Zephyrs* was admired by them alone, whilst the *Blind Fiddler*, on the contrary, attracted large crowds of gazers."

The picture, now in the National Gallery, was engraved by John Burnet. Dr. Waagen says of it:—"This admirable composition is known by the masterly engraving by Burnet. The effect of the colouring is by no means brilliant, yet the tone of the flesh is warm and clear. The colours which, as in Hogarth are much broken, have a very harmonious effect, from the skilful distribution of the light. From the predominance of opaque colours the whole has much the appearance of a tempera picture. In the naïveté and delicate observation of nature, and the honest humour of the subject this picture is a real masterpiece, which deserves the more admiration since we find, by the date affixed that it was painted in 1806, when Wilkie was not more than twenty-one years old. It is on canvas one foot ten inches high, by two feet seven inches wide."

In all the interesting contemporary notices of the annual Exhibition at Somerset House for 1807, the feeling is general that a new era was then dawning for the English school. "Sir John Leicester," says the *Artist* (30 May, 1807), "is the first patron who, in a country abounding in artists and teeming with excellence has dared to set the example of an English gallery formed on a costly and extensive plan hitherto considered due to the works of foreign schools only. (Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wilson, Opie, Northcote, Hoppner, Shee, Thompson, Owen, De Loutherbourg, Turner, Callcott, Sir F.

Bourgeois, and Ward, are mentioned among the painters represented in this gallery.) Sir Francis Baring, Lord Mulgrave, and Sir George Beaumont, were also forming English galleries at the same time.

Other English collections are subsequently mentioned—especially those of Thomas Bernard and Alexander Davison (the owner of Wilkie's *Alfred*), the latter consisting entirely of a series of pictures of historical subjects taken from the annals of our own country. Besides Wilkie, the painters represented in it were Tresham, Smirke, Northcote, Copley, Westall, West, and Devis.

The choice of subjects was left to each painter, and Wilkie selected that of *Alfred in the Neatherd's Cottage*. Wilkie was "very sensible of the honour" of this historical commission, but doubtful of success upon a subject "where the symbols of greatness were wanting." The pupil of Fuseli, and the friend of Haydon, must have had a strong natural love for the truth of things, when he selected for his historical subject a scene with humble accessories that had come within the range of his own observation. "Wilkie was an historical painter," says Ruskin, "and Chantrey an historical sculptor, because they painted or carved the veritable men and things they saw, not men and things as they believed they might have been or should have been." The *Alfred* is now in the gallery of Lord Northbrook.

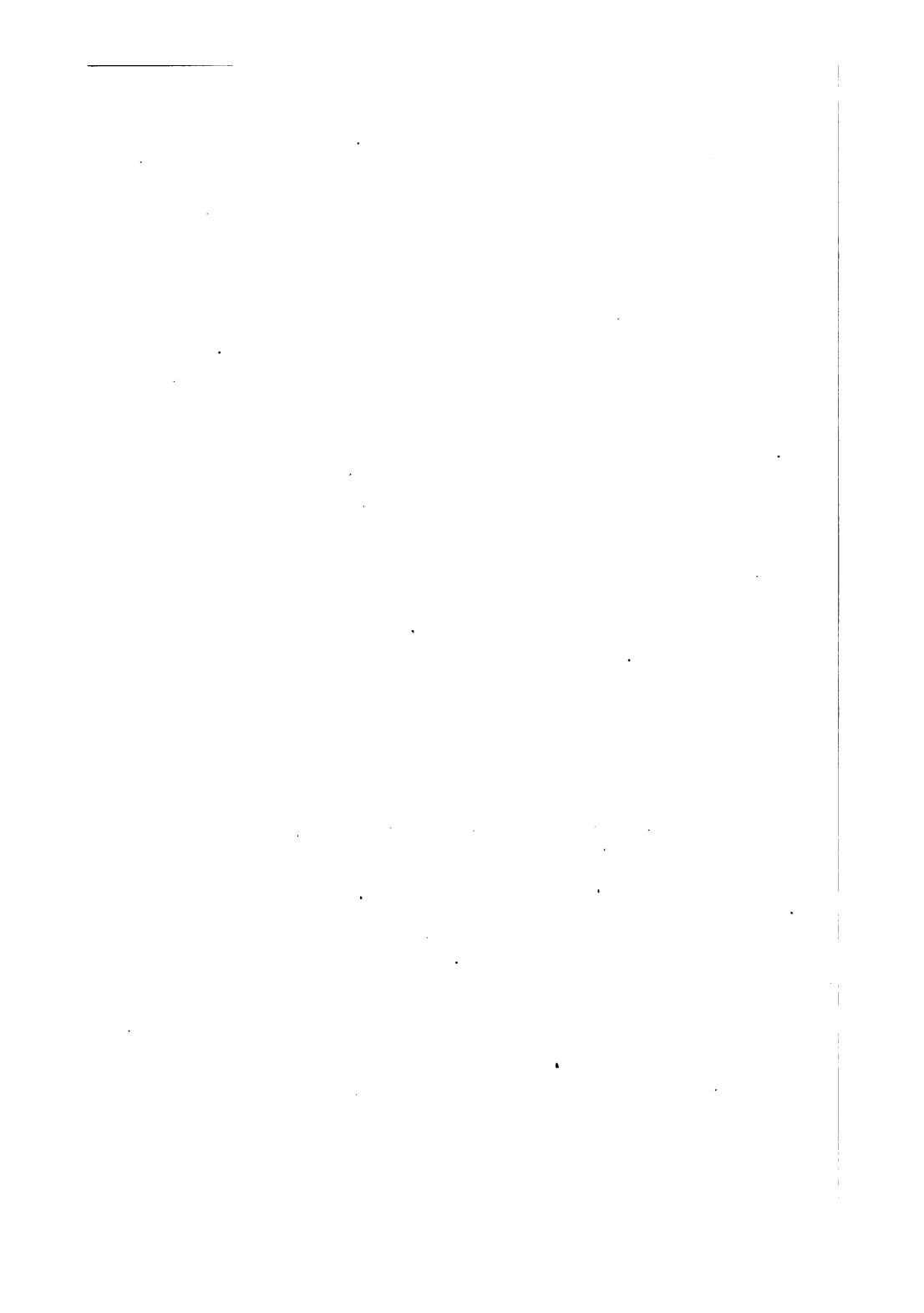
Wilkie had gone home to Cults soon after the opening of the Exhibition of 1807 and there he fell ill of a fever. It was during his illness at the manse (which he describes as the happiest time of his life), that he composed in his mind the great picture of the *Rent Day*—in fulfilment of Lord Mulgrave's commission.

This picture is classified by Burnet with the *Blind Fiddler*, as a specimen of Wilkie's *first manner* "where he imitates

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GROUP FROM "THE RENT DAY" BY WILKIE, Exh.



the precision and sharpness of Teniers and Metsu." Burnet tells us that at this time Wilkie had a small box made in the shape of any interior that he intended to paint, and that he placed in it the entire group, modelled in clay, and dried and painted in a rough manner. This, when subjected to the light introduced through a small opening in the side, in imitation of a window, gave many hints for the arrangement of the light and shade, and suggested those varieties of reflections and half-shadows existing in nature. The perspective of the whole was also more correct, as the point of distance was chosen sufficiently removed, so as to embrace the entire composition at once.

Passing over the innumerable more obvious details in the *Rent Day*, a French critic dwells on the charming group near the table, of the young widow with her two children; like a good housewife, she has brought the key of her cottage with her, and the baby in her lap is biting it eagerly; because the child is cutting its teeth, and the family, in spite of their decent dress and bearing, is not rich enough for the purchase of a piece of coral. Rainbach informs us that a sister of Lady Mulgrave, Mrs. Welsh, and her daughter sat as models for the widow and the little girl. Burnet says of this picture, "The invention and composition of the *Rent Day*, with the admirable mode in which the whole story is told from beginning to end, is sufficient of itself to form a school of subjects in familiar life. Lord Mulgrave sent Wilkie a cheque for 150*l.*, being three times the price originally agreed upon for it, with a note reproaching Wilkie for the low valuation he used to set upon his work, and saying, "I intend this as an admonition to you to avoid such disinterestedness for the future."

Public attention was already directed to Wilkie's great modesty in valuing his works, and the transaction of the preceding year with Lord Mansfield (for the *Village Politicians*), is alluded to in the following extract from an article

signed by "Richard Cumberland," from *The Artist* for Saturday, 16th May, 1807 :—

"Our artists in general are not shy in exhibiting their performances, for you may visit them for a shilling ; neither are they apt to be offended with you if you praise them, for they seem to insinuate, that they are not over-flattered, but rather over *fly-slapped*. Some, whom it is not easy to overpay, are nevertheless well paid ; of which number I conceive Mr. Wilkie, who has merited the title of the British Teniers, is NOT one ; which, if the rich and noble purchaser of his first picture is not clearly satisfied of, he may re-sell his purchase, and gain a thousand pounds by his conviction ; but perhaps artists ought to be lean, and Cæsar was wrong when he wished to have men about him that were fat."

The *Rent Day* was exhibited in 1809 along with the *Cut Finger*. After the death of the Earl of Mulgrave it was offered for sale at Christie and Manson's, but was bought in by the Earl's family at the price of 750 guineas.

Waagen says that for refinement of motive, individuality of expression, clearness and power of colouring, and solid execution and rendering of forms, this picture is the finest he knows by the master. He saw it in the collection of Mr. John Chapman, who paid about 2000*l.* for it.

Whilst Wilkie was taking time over the composition of the *Rent Day*, he painted for Lord Mulgrave, who was anxious to get a specimen of his work in his gallery without delay, a remarkable picture of *Sunday Morning*, of which Allan Cunningham remarks, "There is *peace* in the air and in the house, and old and young are purifying their persons to go to church." The scene is an English cottage.

It was about this time that a correspondence, for which posterity should be grateful, passed between Wilkie and Sir George Beaumont on the subject of the engraving of his pictures, and Wilkie laid to heart and never forgot the counsel that "there cannot be a more pernicious libel on a good picture than a bad print." No painter, says Dr. Waagen, has hitherto had the good fortune to see his works.

engraved with so much delicacy and fidelity as Wilkie. The *Rent Day* was followed by a portrait of *Lady Mary Fitzgerald*, painted for the Earl of Mulgrave.

At this time Wilkie and Haydon were in the habit of exchanging their experiences, and we find a note in Haydon's diary with reference to portrait-painting, for condescending to which some of Wilkie's friends blamed him.

"'This practice,' says Haydon, 'I would always advise a young historical painter to pursue—after having gone through his preparatory studies, let him paint portraits diligently: he will find it of the very first importance. *This was Wilkie's advice to me*, and I followed it to my advantage.'"

Haydon was in perplexity at this time with his *Dentatus*. "If I copied from what I saw in life, Fuseli said, this is too much like life. If I copied the marble, Wilkie said, that looks as if you had painted from stone."

It was soon after the appearance of the *Blind Fiddler* that Wilkie, upon the recommendation of Sir Francis Bourgeois, received a commission from the Duke of Gloucester for the *Card Players*. A conversation is reported on this occasion by Mr. Andrew Wilson, on the subject of the best means to be adopted for the encouragement of "a painter of such wonderful promise," in the course of which one prudent gentleman urges his hearers "not to give Wilkie too many commissions at once, as he would probably exert himself beyond his strength; besides, a young man wrought better from hope, sometimes, than certainty."

Sir George Beaumont at the same time was writing to Wilkie in the following style:—

"One thing more I shall take the liberty of recommending, and that is, the price it will be prudent for you to fix upon your pictures. I have no doubt that at present you might *have any price you might think it reasonable to ask*; but the question is, whether those people who are willing and able to give high prices are sufficiently numerous. I have seen so many instances of young men overrating the patronage of the

public, and in consequence remaining surrounded by their own works, that possessing and feeling the regard I do for you I could not refrain from this hint, and on this ground I know you will excuse me."

The upshot of which was that Wilkie toiled for a bare subsistence, while the buyers, so prudent on his behalf, got his pictures at a nominal fraction of their value, and sold them afterwards at an enormous profit.

A letter of this date from his lodgings in Sol's Row, Hampstead Road, to his brother John, makes this very plain :—

" You will very naturally conclude from the accounts you have most likely heard of the fame that I have acquired, that I must be rapidly accumulating a fortune. It is, however, I am sorry to say, very far from being the case. What I have received since I commenced my career has been but barely sufficient to support me ; and I do not live extravagantly either. Indeed, my present situation is the most singular that can well be imagined. I believe I do not exaggerate when I say that I have at least forty pictures bespoke, and some by the highest people in the kingdom ; yet, after all, *I have but seldom got anything for any picture I have yet painted.*"

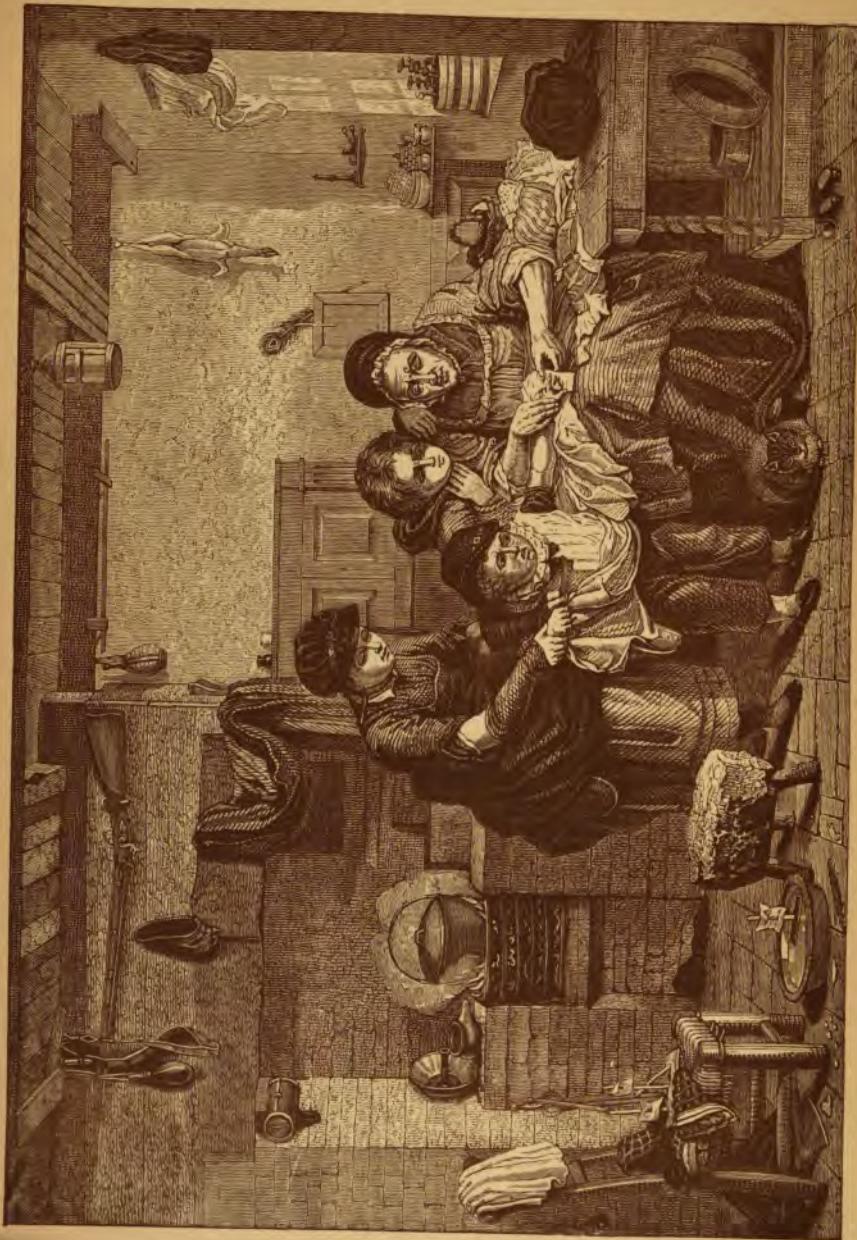
The *Card Players* was the only picture exhibited by Wilkie in 1808. It was painted for fifty guineas, which, says Wilkie, "when the picture was finished, His Royal Highness conceiving to be a great deal too little, most generously asked me to accept of a hundred guineas in addition to the stipulated sum." (The picture was subsequently sold by the Duchess of Gloucester, to Mr. Bredel, for 500 guineas.)

" I have now," adds Wilkie, " advanced another picture a great way towards completion, the subject of which is *A Sick Lady visited by her Physician* ; but as I have felt the inconvenience of painting a picture for a particular person, or for a stated price, I intend to keep this one completely disengaged till it is finished, when I will dispose of it in the way that shall be most to my advantage." The picture is not considered equal to Wilkie's previous efforts,

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*See page 36.*

THE CUT FINGER. BY DAVID WILKIE. PAINTED IN 1809.



although we are told "it was the offspring of long study and of frequent retouching and amendment." The "fierce anxiety" expressed on the face of the mother is noticed. The picture was finished in 1809, and was bought by the Marquis of Lansdowne for 150*l.*

Haydon gives an irresistible sketch of the friends' mode of life at this time; alternate work and play:—

"This period of our lives was one of great happiness. Painting all day; then dining at the Old Slaughter chop-house; then going to the Academy until eight to fill up the evening; then going home to tea. Sometimes lazily inclined after a good dinner, we have lounged about near Drury Lane or Covent Garden, hesitating whether to go in, and often have I (knowing first that there was nothing I wished to see) assumed a virtue I did not possess, and pretending moral superiority preached to Wilkie on the weakness of not resisting such temptations for the sake of our art and our duty, and marched him off to his studies, when he was longing to see *Mother Goose*. One night when I was dying to go in, he dragged me away to the Academy, and insisted on my working, to which I agreed, on the promise of a stroll afterwards. As soon as we had finished, out we went, and, in passing a *PENNY SHOW* in the Piazza, we fired up and determined to go in. We entered and slunk away in a corner; while waiting for the commencement of the show, in came all our student friends, one after the other. We shouted out at each one as he arrived, and then popped our heads down in our corner again, much to the indignation of the chimney-sweeps and vegetable boys who composed the audience, but at last we were discovered, and then we all joined in applauding the entertainment of *Pull Devil, pull Baker*, and at the end raised such a storm of applause, clapping our hands, stamping our feet, and shouting with all the power of a dozen pair of lungs, that, to save our heads from the fury of the sweeps, we had to run down stairs as if the devil was trying to catch us."

After which boisterous recreation the whole party adjourned to Haydon's rooms for tea and technicalities; until the small hours introduced the routine of another day of rest, study, and amusement. Haydon says he looks back on these days as "the most uninterrupted by envy, the least harassed by anxiety, and the fullest of unalloyed pleasure," of all he has known in his life.

On the 1st May, 1808, Wilkie began to keep a consecutive

journal, and account of his proceedings—which is exceedingly interesting, and is transcribed by Allan Cunningham at length. It is remarkably occupied with records of the visits that he had from great or eminent men, and it introduces the reader to the principal painters of the time. It is also evidence that Wilkie must have been highly appreciated for his social and personal qualities apart from his art fame, and there are a number of entries that show his health and welfare to have been objects of solicitude to the friends he had acquired in the first place by his genius, and then attracted by his personal merit and by ties of sympathy.

Haydon is inseparable from his hours of leisure, and the two friends go together with great regularity on Sundays to hear sermons from the Rev. Sydney Smith. Among the friends he visits or is visited by at this time, who are mentioned most frequently in his diary are, of course, Lord and Lady Mulgrave and Sir George Beaumont, then Sir Francis Bourgeois, the founder of the Dulwich Gallery, Rogers the poet, Mr. Samuel Dobree of Walthamstowe, Lord and Lady Lansdowne, Mr. Angerstein (whose collection of paintings subsequently formed the nucleus of the National Gallery), Mr. Wells, who had lent him a Van Ostade—he borrowed works of Van Ostade and Teniers frequently and studied them at home.

He was working at this time upon *The Jew's Harp*, and *The Sick Lady*. As the journal goes on, it is seen that his acquaintance ramifies and increases in degree of intimacy with the leaders of the day in art, literature and social rank, and it looks as if the whole of the world were passing in succession through his studio. He was fond of the theatre, and (on the 25th of June) saw Mathews act Sir Fretful Plagiary, “with which,” he says, “I was highly delighted.”

He was fond of the society of ladies; on the 29th of June,

“Dr. Thomson was so kind as to take me to Lord Darnley's, at Cobham Hall, where I admired the splendour of the house and the richness of the

picture gallery ; saw a picture of Titian, by himself—very fine, a large picture by Rubens, with many figures, and the *Samuel* of Sir Joshua Reynolds, which certainly kept its place notwithstanding the fame of its competitors. Saw Lord and Lady Darnley, to whom I had been formerly introduced ; dined and took a walk in the evening with the young ladies. On the next day accompanied Miss Thomson to the top of a neighbouring hill, returned and dined ; had game at trap and ball, and shot at a mark with bows and arrows ; Miss Thomson brought me the present of a box full of colours from Mrs. Muskett, a great amateur in the art of painting. On the following Sunday went to church, and had the pleasure of hearing performed, in the middle of the service, Handel's *Te Deum*, which had a very grand effect ; had an excellent sermon from Dr. Thomson."

The journal is, of course, too long to transcribe *in extenso*, but it is delightful reading. There is an absence at the same time of excitement and monotony in Wilkie's harmless life, which contrasts strongly with the hot alternations of enjoyment and despair that characterise the autobiography of his friend Haydon.

When he returned home he found Haydon recovering from a fever of which he had fallen ill during his absence. On the same day he went to Sadler's Wells, and saw a new pantomime. "Stopped on our way back," he says, "at Bagnigge Wells, where we saw *Jews and Jewesses dancing to the tune of the Fairy Dance*." In the same month "had a call from a Mr. L., who disgusted me by his fulsome flattery." On the 3rd of August, "to amuse myself began to make a blot of the *Public House Door*, the subject I intend to paint next." It is astonishing, all this time, what an amount of labour he is expending upon the *Jew's Harp*, not a day is without its line in this respect. On the 18th he went again into Kent to Dr. Pitcairns, where he visited the seat of Lord Audley on the banks of the Thames—"the house had many pictures ; those by Rubens, Teniers, Paul Veronese, and Murillo, really surprised me : we stayed more than an hour, during which I made some slight sketches as memorandums for the picture" (*the Alehouse Door*).

It is not possible to make use of the copious materials which exist for a record day by day of all the incidents of Wilkie's life ; the tenor of it is always the same. Absorbed in his art, and receptive of enjoyment, fond of refined surroundings and society, without *arrière pensée*, full of simplicity as of power, his life is that of any other happy man of genius whose mind is clear and healthy as his own. When we shall see him at Abbotsford in contact with Washington Irving and Sir Walter Scott, their identity of character in this respect will be obvious.

The pictures that were completed at this time are the *Sick Lady*, the *Jew's Harp*, and the *Cut Finger*. The first is full of pathos, and so obvious in the expression thereof, that it is only upon a second thought that we remember to look for the details of the art that have made of the picture such a natural and real incident as excludes the idea of "inventive" genius. It is a picture that forces sympathy to a degree where the enjoyment of its art is lost in the pain caused by the realisation of its subject. The *Jew's Harp* is a pretty picture of an equally sympathetic domestic incident, but this time of a pleasurable character. And the *Cut Finger* is another household subject of still more simple domesticity. It was good in the days of the "grand school" of Fuseli to see the whole world of critics led captive by these three nursery subjects, as they had been two years before by what Northcote had called the "beggarly" style. Wilkie came forward, in this respect, as Rembrandt and others in similar times have done before him, as the vindicator of nature against art.

Wilkie's journal for 1809 opens with the record, "Went to church with Jackson, who *expressed no dissatisfaction*, although Sydney Smith was not particularly brilliant." On the 6th, being Twelfth Night, he went by appointment to Sir William Beechey's, where, he says—



THE JEW'S HARP. BY DAVID WILKIE.

*Painted in 1808.*

*See page 30.*

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"We had a very splendid entertainment. I there met for the first time the too celebrated Lady Hamilton. She had with her a girl, supposed to be the daughter of Lord Nelson—a creature of great sweetness. Lady Hamilton knowing me by name, called me, and said that her daughter had the finest taste imaginable, and that she excelled in graceful attitudes. She then made her stand in the middle of the room with a piece of drapery, and throw herself into a number of those elegant postures for which her ladyship in her prime was so distinguished. She afterwards told me of all else her daughter could do, and concluded by asking me if I did not think her very like her father. I said I had never seen that eminent person. Lady Hamilton is lusty and tall, and of fascinating manners, but her features are bold and masculine. Her daughter's name is Horatia Hamilton. After supper we were entertained by some songs from Lady Hamilton, and with a fine specimen of mimicry from Mr. Twiss, who gave us a speech in the manner of Pitt, which many pronounced excellent."

Sir William Beechey, in whose house this scene occurs was at this time engaged upon a portrait of Wilkie. Wilkie and Haydon were always taking people to church to hear Sydney Smith preach; on the 29th, we are told, they took Sir William Beechey with them, and heard "a very good sermon on the use and abuse of time."

Wilkie was certainly making a good use of his own ; besides his social engagements, which, to judge from the visiting recorded in his diary, must have been considerable, he was just finishing his portraits of the Marchioness of Lansdowne and that of the Neave family ; he was putting the finishing touches to the *Cut Finger* and the *Sick Lady*, and he never missed an opportunity of attending lectures and the Life School at the Academy. The entry of the 23rd of January says—"Mr. Neave came to me with the sad news of the death of Sir John Moore and the re-embarkation of our troops : went and heard a very sensible lecture from Anthony Carlisle, introductory to his course of anatomy."

On the 15th of February Wilkie received a "very handsome valentine with verses, signed Helen ; but from whom I cannot conjecture." On the 24th he receives a poem from

the author of "Will and Jean," which, he says "I regard as a handsome compliment, coming from a man of his reputation." He had been on that day to see the Baillies at Hampstead, and on his return found the sky all red with the burning of Drury Lane theatre. He was again at Hampstead on the 5th of March to dine with Miss Baillie. "Joanna told me during the evening that she had two volumes of plays, which were said to contain the plots of Shakespeare's *Lear*, *King John*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Henry the Fourth*, which she would be glad to show me at some future time." On the 17th of April he dined with Mr. Murray in Fleet Street, where he met Mr. Westall, Mr. Ballantyne, and "for the first time," Walter Scott,

"Whom I found most entertaining in conversation. He seems to possess a very rich mind, is very communicative of the all but universal knowledge he has acquired. He talked principally about the ancient Highlanders under the feudal system, and enriched his observations with interesting anecdotes. He repeated one of Campbell's poems ('Lochiel's Warning')."

On the 23rd April he is introduced by Fuseli to the celebrated General Miranda, and met and conversed for a considerable time with Callcott the painter. The Academy opened on the first Monday in May, and Wilkie exhibited the *Cut Finger*, and the *Rent Day*.

His success embittered the failure of poor Haydon, whose *Dentatus* was relegated to an anteroom. Wilkie does not mention it in his diary, but Haydon does in *his*. Sir George Beaumont, he says,

"Redoubled his kind attentions, told me not to be discouraged, and said out boldly that not one of them could produce such a work. But Wilkie, Wilkie whom I loved so dearly, the friend and companion of all my early days and thoughts, he shrank from my defence! How my heart ached at his coldness! but it was the timid man."

The reconciliation, however, was not long in arriving and was complete, and the friends joined hands for an excursion

by sea. Haydon had received from Lord Mulgrave a letter to Sir Roger Curtis, the Port Admiral at Portsmouth, asking for a sea-trip in a man-of-war bound to Plymouth. Wilkie joined and the two left town on the 22nd June, and were well received by Sir Roger, who promised to put them on board of a cutter, which was the only vessel that was going to Plymouth. After waiting three days they set out, and the description of the voyage is given in Haydon's most graphic style. He seems to have enjoyed everything, while poor Wilkie was sick from the first and went from bad to worse.

"I relished their salt beef and biscuit, but poor Wilkie continued almost insensible. He lay in bed with his nose close to the deck, and the scrubbing, scraping and cleaning in the morning was enough to split the brain of even a healthy head. I felt for him. In the middle of the day, when we were regaling at lunch, who should heave up his awful figure, with head enveloped in red nightcap, but Wilkie, pale, hollow-cheeked, his quivering lips blue and parched, and his chin unshaven. We received him with a hearty shout, but the sight of the meat and porter, and our jolly uproarious air, so shook his nerves that he dropped down again in despair. At daybreak next morning we passed the Mew Stone, and by 3 P.M. were safe at anchor in the Sound. Wilkie quickly recovered his spirits, and the next day we were invited to dine with a large party."

The friends passed their time pleasantly at Plymouth; they made a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Sir Joshua Reynolds, where they saw, in his bedroom, an early attempt at a portrait which he had drawn with his finger dipped in ink, which must have reminded David of the mural ornaments of his own nursery in the Manse at Culz; they bathed frequently at a place called the Two Coves, and Wilkie stretched himself on the dining-table to be taught the art of striking out. From Plymouth they went together to visit Sir George Beaumont at Coleorton, where they passed a fortnight "as delightfully as painters could." Sir George's practice of reading aloud every evening must have tried their patience, but Wilkie gravely records day by day, the subjects he selected.

In the daytime the friends rambled at liberty, and Wilkie sketched cottages and landscapes, and took his sketches into the house and compared them with Sir George's Rubens, "and made such alterations as the study of the great master suggested." Haydon says, "We dined with the Claude and Rembrandt before us, breakfasted with the Rubens landscape, and did nothing, morning, noon, or night, but think of painting, talk of painting, dream of painting, and wake to paint again." Haydon came back to visit Coleorton, in 1837, and he says he was touched to see it again after so many years. "Jackson, Lord Mulgrave, Sir George and Lady Beaumont, were all dead, and I walked through the house in a melancholy stupor, angry to see the rooms, where once hung the *élite* of our now national pictures, filled with modern works, and the two superb heads (by Sir Joshua) of Sir George and Lady Beaumont pushed high up to make way for some commonplace trash."

On the 6th of November of this year (1809) Wilkie was elected Associate of the Royal Academy, after a personal canvass of the Academicians. Sir William Beechey, we are told, advised him to take this step, and on the 3rd of November, he tells us he called on Farrington, Woodford, and Northcote—next morning on Flaxman, Sir Francis Bourgeois, and Sir William Beechey. At Turner's and Wyatt's he left his card; Westall, Stothard and Nollekens received him, he said, with great kindness. West, Thomson, Howard, Shee and Phillips, were either unwell, engaged, or out of town. With Copley, Tresham, Fuseli, Gandy, Richards, Cosway, and Smirke, he was more fortunate. "I concluded my day's labours," he adds, "by calling on Lawrence, Hoppner, and Dance, none of whom I saw. All these calls I accomplished between nine and four. Hoppner, I was sorry to learn, was ill, and growing daily worse." (He died a few months after.) Wilkie was working at this time upon the *Alehouse Door*, and

the *Portrait of the Neave family*. His journal records his steady perseverance and slow progress from day to day, and the conscientious resolution with which he rubbed out and recommenced the many details that failed to content him.

*The Man with the Girl's Cap*, also in progress at the same time, was finished in time for the next Exhibition, but Wilkie withdrew it, after sending it in, in deference to the suggestion of the Academicians, by whom it was unfavourably compared with the works of Edward Bird, whose pictures, of the same domestic and familiar subjects as those of Wilkie, had attracted attention. Allan Cunningham says that when Cromeck introduced Bird to Wilkie, the latter liked his compositions much; but that on a second examination he abated his admiration a little; and that Cromeck spoke of Bird as a genius who had already conquered Wilkie with his own weapons, saying, "Gad! Sir, he's predestined to humble your tall thin countryman, who is as silent as the grave, and as proud as Lucifer."

The incident of his retirement before Bird, affected Wilkie very deeply, and was possibly the original motive of his plan, which he carried into effect in 1811, of a separate exhibition of his own works. The Prince of Wales bought Bird's picture, and then asked Wilkie to paint a companion picture to it. At the private view Wilkie told Haydon that if he had seen Bird's picture, he would never have withdrawn his own.

On the 14th, he had a call from his rival, Bird, "who came to town two days ago,—*I did not show him any of my pictures*," says David.

In February 1811, Wilkie was elected to the vacancy among the full members of the Royal Academy, caused by the death of Sir Francis Bourgeois.

"Wilkie," says Cunningham, "who had looked up to the Royal Academy with something of the reverence of a son, obeyed all its rules, listened to all its maxims, treasured up its counsels in his heart, practised

them in his life, believed that its members rivalled the prime ones of the earth, and that the chair of the President outshone the thrones of Ormuz or of Ind, received this intimation with a sober joy peculiar to himself.

"Not so the lovers of art. They rejoiced aloud to see this admission of fresh life-blood into the Academy, and that so great a favourite, and one so worthy, had been elected while he was yet vigorous and young."

Wilkie's two pictures in the Academy Exhibition of 1811 were *A Humorous Scene* and *A Gamekeeper*. He was working hard always at the *Alehouse Door*, but had not yet advanced it to a condition for exhibiting. Haydon and he, it appears began two grand pictures, Haydon his *Macbeth*, and Wilkie the *Alehouse Door* after their return from their tour in Devonshire. "What a history," cries Haydon, "would the events during their progress furnish to the inexperienced student! How gaily we began them, how soon we were checked!"

The *Village Festival* (or the *Alehouse Door*, as it was originally called) occupies a principal part of Wilkie's diary, as it did of his attention, during the time of its production, from 1808 to 1811. It is not such a general favourite as most of his other early works. Leslie considers it "the most artificial of his earlier productions, although the exquisite delicacy of touch which marks more or less every period of his art, is here seen in the greatest perfection." Hazlitt, in his criticisms of the "Angerstein collection," says:—

"It is here, and deserves to be here. Still it is not his best; though there are some very pleasing rustic figures and some touching passages in it. As in his *Blind Man's Buff*, the groups are too straggling and spread over too large a surface of bare foreground, which Mr. Wilkie does not paint well. It looks more like putty than earth or clay. The artist has a better eye for individual details than for the general tone of objects. Mr. Liston's face in this flock of drunks is a smiling failure."

"The *Village Festival*," says Dr. Waagen, "where a countryman who has indulged too freely is led home by his family, is indeed highly humorous in the expression of the heads and masterly in the keeping and chiaroscuro, but the figures appear too small for the size of the picture and too scattered; while the house and other accessories are too slightly treated to make up for this defect. The faces, too, in the rather indefinite

forms, and the cold reddish tone of the flesh, bear no comparison with the *Blind Fiddler*. It is inscribed with the date 1811. [On canvas, three feet one inch high, four feet two inches wide.] Painted for W. Angerstein, Esq. The price of this picture was 800 guineas. It is now in the National Gallery."

Wilkie now engaged a very handsome room in Pall Mall, nearly opposite the British Gallery, which, he considered, from its size and entrance, as particularly adapted to his purpose, and from its situation, "as highly respectable as any in London," and opened his exhibition on the 1st of May. He appointed Thomas MacDonald, a Scotchman and an acquaintance of the old Edinburgh Academy days, to be the keeper of the exhibition, at a salary of four guineas a week.

We give a copy of the catalogue, which, says Cunningham, is now as rare as it is curious.

A catalogue of the Pictures painted by D. Wilkie, R.A. now exhibiting at No 87 Pall Mall. Admittance, one shilling. Catalogues gratis. London : printed by C. H. Reynell, 21 Piccadilly. 1812.

The Public are respectfully informed, that (permission having been granted by the proprietor to Mr. Wilkie) : an engraving will be made by Mr. Raimbach, from the original picture of VILLAGE POLITICIANS. The size of the engraving will be twenty-two by sixteen inches, being the same as that of the print of the *Blind Fiddler*. The price to subscribers will be two guineas—proofs, four guineas ; half to be paid at the time of subscribing, and the remainder on the delivery of the print. The best impressions will be strictly appropriated to the earliest subscribers.

Subscriptions will be received at the *Exhibition Room*, No 87 Pall Mall ; at Mr. Wilkie's, *Kensington* ; and at Mr. Raimbach's, No 10 Warren Street, *Fitzroy Square*.

#### CATALOGUE.

Those that have been exhibited at the Royal Academy are marked thus \*.

|  |      |                         |      |
|--|------|-------------------------|------|
| No. 1. The New Coat, from the tale<br>of Jeannot and Collin— <i>Vol-</i><br><i>taire</i> . . . . . | 1807 | 5. Jew's Harp . . . .   | 1808 |
| 2. *Village Politicians .  | 1806 | 6. *Blind Fiddler . . . | 1806 |
| 3 *A Gamekeeper. . .   | 1811 | 7. *The Cut Finger . .  | 1809 |
| 4. Blindman's Buff (unfinished)  |      | 8. The Sick Lady . .    | 1808 |
|  |      | 9. The Village Holiday  | 1811 |

In the principal group of this picture, a man is represented hesitating whether to go home with his wife or remain with his companions at the public house.

"On ae hand, drink 's deadly poison  
Bare ilk firm resolve awa'  
On the ither, Jean's condition,  
Rave his very heart in twa."  
*Macneil.*

10. A Family Picture . 1810
11. Portraits of a Clergyman and his Wife . . . . 1807
12. "The Rent Day . . . . 1807
13. Portrait of a Lady of Quality . . . . 1807
14. Alfred reprimanded by the Neatherd's Wife for his Inattention to the Toasting of her Cakes † . . . . 1806

15. "The Wardrobe Ransacked. 1810
16. "The Card Players . 1808
17. The Sunday Morning 1805
18. Sketch of The Blind Fiddler
19. —— of the Village Politicians
20. —— of the Wardrobe Ransacked
21. —— of the Sick Lady
22. The Country Fair (1) 1804
23. Sketch of the Jew's Harp
24. —— of the Rent Day
25. —— of Boys digging for Rats (2) . . . . 1811
26. —— of Alfred in the Neatherd's Cottage
27. —— of the Card Players
28. —— of the Cut Finger
29. Study from Nature of a Gipsy Woman and Child. . 1810

† History of England.

1. This is one of the artist's earliest pictures ; most of the figures in it are portraits of the inhabitants of a small village in Scotland, where the fair is annually held, and near to which the picture was painted.
2. The picture of which this is a sketch was painted last year, and is placed in the Council-room of the Royal Academy, as a diploma picture.

F I N I S.



## CHAPTER IV.

1812 TO 1815.

“BLINDMAN’S BUFF”—“THE PEDLAR”—“LETTER OF INTRODUCTION”—“DUNCAN GRAY”—JOURNEYS TO PARIS, THE NETHERLANDS, AND SCOTLAND.

THE exhibition, although it greatly advanced his reputation, was not a financial success. It cost Wilkie 414*l.*, but, we are told, there is no account of the receipts ; only, “the artist used to shake his head when any one inquired about the success of his exhibition.” On the 20th May, he enters in his memoranda that he had to pay 32*l.*, due from Thomas Wilson to Ant. Harding, to release the picture of the *Village Holiday*, distrained for rent, and it is suggested that this incident gave Wilkie the first idea of his celebrated picture of *Distraining for Rent*.

It was in the autumn of this year that his father, after a long illness, died “full of years, and with the tranquillity of a Christian, on the 1st day of December, 1812.” Upon this event Wilkie arranged for his mother and sister to come and join him in London, and for their joint accommodation he took a new house in Phillimore Place, which he describes in a letter to his sister as “elegant, commodious, and very well built.” He spoke afterwards of their arrival (in August) as the happiest hour of his life.

He was engaged in 1813 in the hanging of the pictures at the Royal Academy ; and at the public dinner which followed the opening of the Exhibition was treated with a degree of distinction which was very flattering. The Prince Regent, who was present, came up to him and told him that he was delighted with the picture (*Blindman's Buff*) which he had painted for him, and that he wished to have a companion picture of the same size. This commission was filled by the *Penny Wedding*, finished in 1819, when George IV. was already on the throne. The Marquis of Stafford also reminded Wilkie of his promise of a picture for him, outstanding several years. It was, however, not until 1817 that the *Breakfast* was finished for the Marquis. The *Pedlar*, purchased by Dr. Baillie, Wilkie's physician, for 320 guineas, was Wilkie's second picture in the Exhibition.

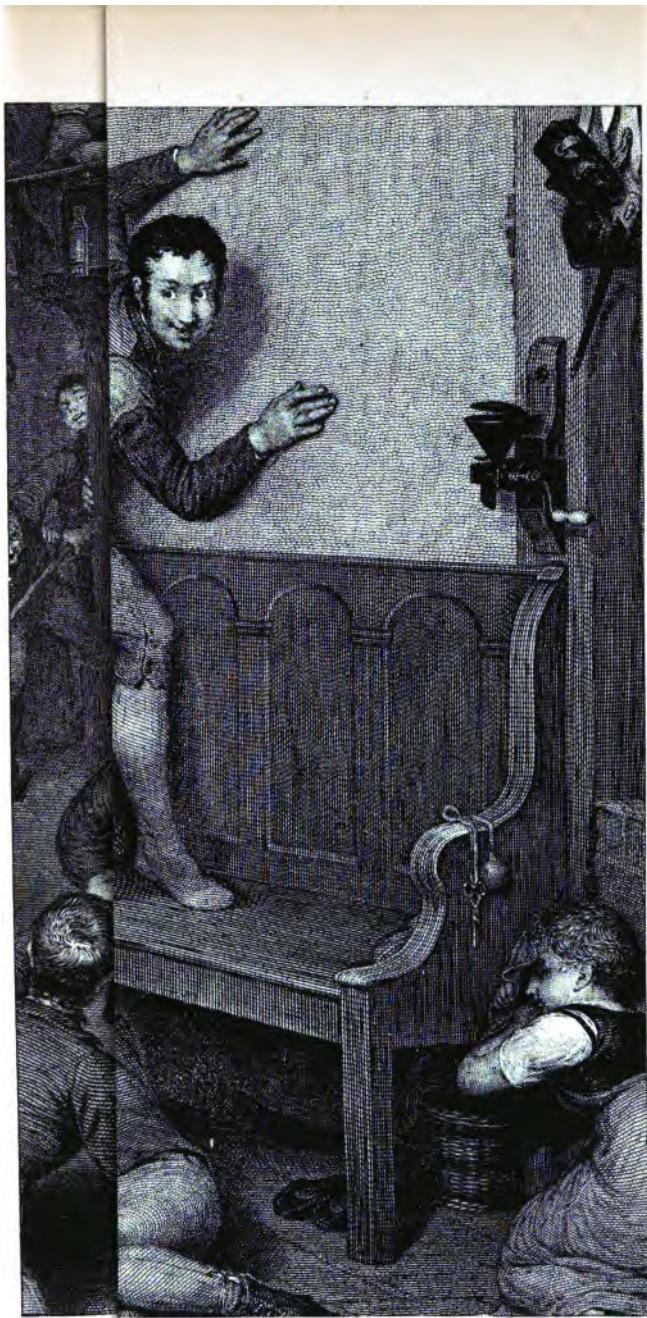
He was occupied at this time upon the *Bagpiper* for Sir Francis Freeling—a small picture, for which he received only forty guineas.

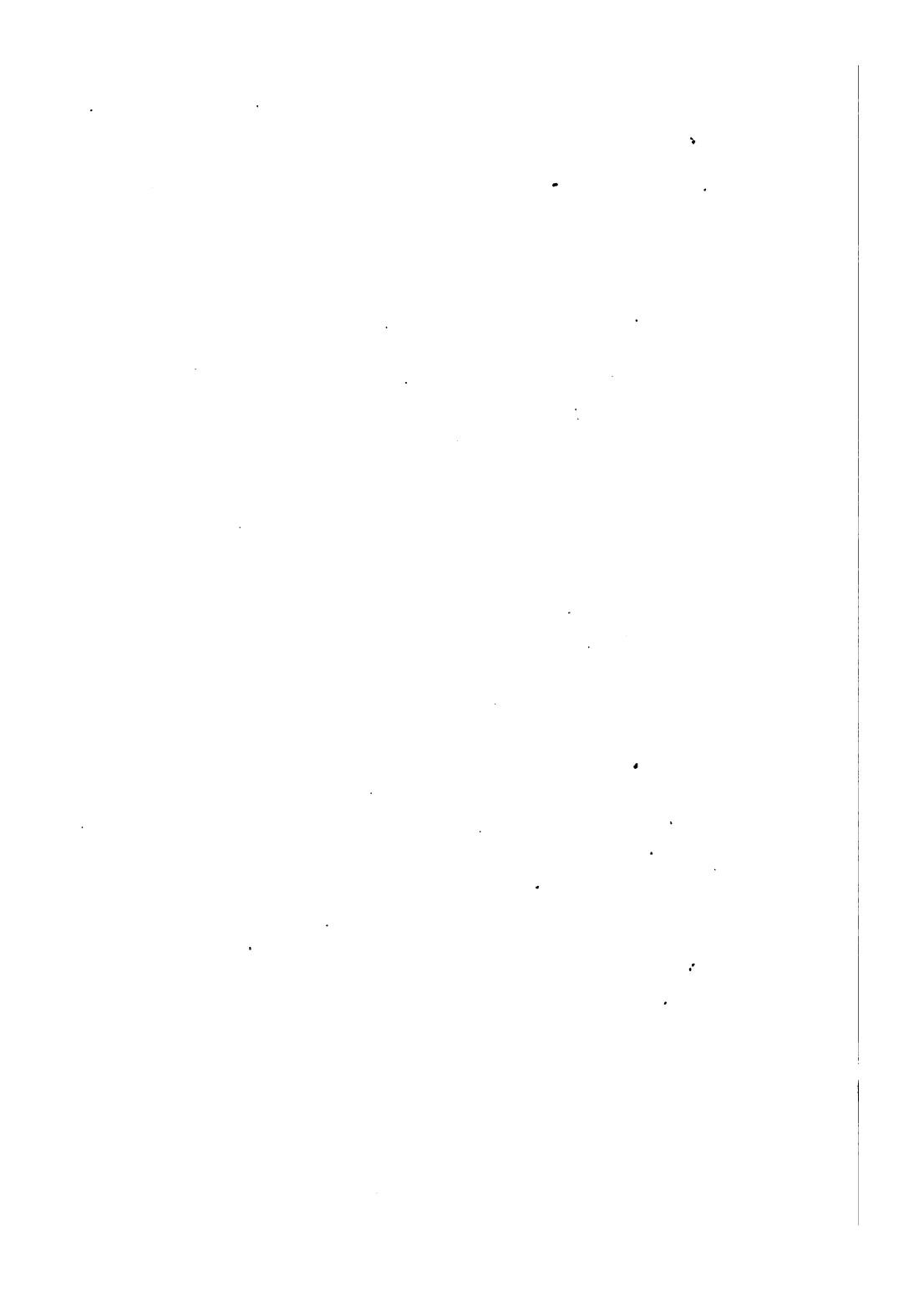
All this time poor Haydon had been suffering great hardship. Wilkie had plainly refused to allow himself to be committed to Haydon's wild warfare with the Academy, and wrote him a calm, sensible letter of remonstrance, which produced no effect. Haydon looked at the position with considerable justice.

"Wilkie and I," he says, "were different beings, yet sincerely attached to each other in proportion to the opposition of our natures, though neither approved the excesses in the character of each. I gloried in proportion as the world left me—Wilkie only flourished as society nourished him ; I defied the present time for the sake of the future—Wilkie looked to the future through the affections of the time being."

The pictures that Wilkie sent to the Exhibition in 1814, were the *Letter of Introduction* and *Duncan Gray*, then called the *Refusal*.

Haydon's troubles came to a temporary lull in the spring of this year, in consequence of the success of his great picture of





the *Judgment of Solomon*, which he sold for 600 guineas ; and Wilkie must have warmly participated in his joy. He invited Haydon to let his sister stay at his house while they went together to Paris.

"Paris," says Haydon, "was now the most interesting place on earth. Napoleon was overthrown and going to Elba. All the nations on earth were there. The Louvre was in its glory. Such wonders can be only conceived. No human being hereafter can ever enter into the feelings of Europe when we heard Napoleon was in retreat : it cannot be comprehended."

On the 25th of May, according to Wilkie's journal, on the 26th according to Haydon's, they set out by way of Brighton, where they met with a packet on the point of sailing for Dieppe. Haydon's diary is infinitely more interesting than that of Wilkie, but it is very long.

"Wilkie's object in the journey," he says, "was to open a connexion for the sale of his prints, and mine to see France and the Louvre. Raimbach gave me a letter to Bervic, the celebrated line engraver. Wilkie had taken some lessons in French of an emigrant of good connexions, who gave us another to Monsieur de Launay, who lived in the Place Vendôme."

At Rouen they went to the Cathedral, where they heard grand mass. "A scene," says Wilkie, "that I shall never forget, and which, I think, no person could see without being inspired with veneration for the Roman Catholic religion." The awe, that was inspired in him by the solemnity of the worship in another church, was, he says, "considerably removed by seeing a number of young men playing at some game, like cricket, immediately before the church" (on the Sabbath).

Their drive was, of course, the more interesting for the crisis in European affairs that had its centre at Paris at the time of their arrival, and the groups that they encountered on the road, offered them a great variety of picturesque and novel studies.

"I do not know," says Wilkie, in his first letter from Paris

to his sister, "that I ever made a journey that has given me more satisfaction, or from which I have derived more new ideas." "The journey," he adds, "has been a perpetual roar of laughter." They were no sooner settled at their lodging in the Rue St. Benoit, than Wilkie fell ill; but a dose of lemonade, and rest, quickly cured him, and on Haydon's return from a walk he found him quite refreshed and up, and had been trying to teach Madame English.

"He was laughing ready to die, and made signs to me. Madame said, 'Monsieur Haydon, votre ami se moque de moi.' 'Comment, Madame?' 'V'la des mots qu'il me dit être Anglais!' and she held up a paper with the well-known lines which he had been trying to make her pronounce, 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pepper off a pewter plate,' &c."

It is impossible, however great the temptation, to follow the friends through the interesting account that each has left in his own style, of their enjoyments at Paris.

Wilkie, taking pleasure as an accessory, finds an object in his movements, and steadily keeps up his visits to his friends and acquaintances, and the delivery of his letters of introduction. When he visits the Galleries, or the public monuments, his remarks are practical and valuable; and even his record of the pieces he saw in their almost daily visits to the theatres are very interesting.

Haydon on the contrary is nothing if not subjective, and the principal interest attaching to his rhapsodical diary is the light that it throws on his character, and on the impressions that he received from the novel scenes around him. His narrative is full of suspicious stories that bear internal evidence of their exaggeration or total invention. Wilkie's criticisms on the modern pictures are very unfavourable, and he speaks especially of David with unmitigated censure. As he grows familiar with the Dutch masters, he notices that the Ostades and the Rembrandts improve greatly in his appreciation, the works of Teniers and others in that style rather lose.

Haydon's description of the impression made upon him and Wilkie by the portrait of Bonaparte that Gérard had done in 1804 is worth repeating :—

*"Bonaparte ten years ago.—A horrid yellow for complexion ; the tip of his nose tinged with red ; his eyes fixed and stern, with a liquorish wateriness ; his lips red dirt ; his mouth cool, collected, and resolute. 'All the other heads in the room looked like children beside him,' Wilkie said, and so they did. I never was so horribly touched by a human expression."*

Wilkie returned on July 3rd, leaving Haydon still in Paris, who tells us he felt low at his departure.

"There is a simplicity in his manners, a soundness and originality in his thinking, which make him an instructive companion. His remarks on the French school were capital. He said they were the consequences, and not the causes, of encouragement. There was hardly a day but we had a dispute, and yet we were always better pleased with each other's society than with the society of others. One great point of dispute was how much to give to the postillions. He said I always gave them more than they deserved, and I said he always gave them less.

"Notwithstanding Paris was filled with all the nations of the earth, the greatest oddity in it was unquestionably David Wilkie. His horrible French, his strange, tottering, feeble, pale look, his carrying about his prints to make bargains with printsellers, his resolute determination never to leave the restaurants till he got all his change right to a centime ; his long disputes about *sous* and *demi-sous* with the *dame du comptoir*, whilst Madame tried to cheat him, and as she pressed her pretty ringed fingers on his arm without making the least impression ; her 'Mais, Monsieur !' and his Scotch 'Mais, Madame !' were worthy of Molière."

Wilkie reached home in safety on the 6th of July. The last record in his journal of his excursion says : "Whatever delight or satisfaction I have derived from my journey to Paris, it has not made me think the less of my own country."

He found on his return that his picture of the *Letter of Introduction* had acquired great popularity, and one of his first cares, the Exhibition being then recently closed, was to fetch it away and deliver it to the buyer, Mr. Samuel Dobree.

The story told by Cunningham of the origin of this picture is that it arose out of Wilkie's personal experience upon his first arrival in town,

when some kind friend had furnished him with a letter of introduction to a person of the name of Caleb Whiteford, the discoverer of "the cross readings" in newspapers. Caleb asked the young painter how old he was. "Really now," said Wilkie, hesitating. "Ha!" exclaimed Caleb, "introduce a man to me who knows not how old he is!" and regarded him with that dubious look which is the chief charm of the picture.

The picture was bought by Mr. Samuel Dobree for 250 guineas.

Wilkie soon settled down steadily to work upon his next great picture, *Distraining for Rent*, which he had had in his mind since the seizure of one of his pictures at his private exhibition in Pall Mall, in 1811. He had this picture ready for the Academy in 1815. The Directors of the British Institution bought it for 600 guineas.

Soon afterwards Haydon went down to Brighton for his health, and Wilkie joined him, and made the acquaintance of Prince Hoare, and the Rev. Mr. Douglas, a warm antiquarian and the author of the *Nenia Britannica*. Under his guidance they all went and opened a barrow, "on the hill close to the church," together, and were rewarded by finding an urn of unbaked clay, from which there fell out the burnt bones of a human skeleton.

Whilst they were at Brighton they received a letter from John Scott (the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle*), who was in Paris, in which he said:—

"I must tell you that on Friday last I made a catalogue of the works in the Louvre—a gigantic job; two hundred and seventy form the whole collection. In the Italian division sixteen remain. The *Transfiguration* is not one of them. I saw the Venetian horses go. I was most lucky in getting to the top of the arch. I sat in the car. I stood in the car. I plundered the car. I have brought with me a ram's horn from it, to blow down the walls of the first Jericho I have a chance of being despatched to by you when I bother you in busy hours."

Haydon says that Wilkie was not sorry for the dispersion of the Louvre. He said "The works would be seen by fewer who have no relish, and would be less liable to absurd comment."

It was in November of this year that the friends met Canova, who visited Haydon's painting room and said much to encourage him. Haydon says, "One had a feeling about Canova as if he were a descendant from the great."

Wilkie speaks of him in a letter to John Anderson, Esq., Edinburgh, of 10th December :—

"We have lately had Canova, the celebrated sculptor from Rome among us. He was sent to Paris by the Pope to arrange the carrying back of the works of art that belong to the Italian state; and when his business there was over, he came to see the state of the arts in this country. I had the good fortune to be introduced to him soon after his arrival, by Lord Hamilton, and had the honour of a call from him at my house, which has given me the means of forming an acquaintance with him that may be of importance to me at a future time. . . . He saw the works of a great number of our painters and sculptors during his stay; and among the rest was once or twice at Haydon's, with whose picture he expressed himself very much pleased. . . His appearance has made a stir among us."

In the autumn of this year, Wilkie in company with Raimbach, the engraver, went for a tour in the Netherlands. Haydon says, "he received from him letters full of fresh and close observation." Besides his visits to the galleries, Wilkie carried his prints about with him, and obtained subscriptions to them wherever he went. At Antwerp Raimbach left him, and missed seeing at the Museum the three great Rubens, which had then just arrived from Paris to be restored to the cathedral. "They appeared to me," Wilkie writes, "among the finest works of Rubens; and as they were not hung up I saw them to great advantage."

He describes an adventure that he had met with at Calais, when stopping to sketch "Hogarth's Gate;" he was arrested and taken before the mayor, who, however, after explanation, dismissed him politely. Wilkie's letter to Sir George Beaumont at this time is very interesting. The people, the houses, the trees, and whole tracts of country, about Ostend, remind him of the landscapes of Teniers

and as he penetrates further into the country the pictures of Rubens, Wouwerman, and others take his place. He traces to himself the particular districts in Holland where Ostade, Jan Steen, Cuyp and Rembrandt should have studied. He finds himself familiar with every aspect of the country from the recollection he has of the faithful interpretations of it that he has seen in pictures. In a letter to Haydon he dwells upon the treatment that the pictures from Paris had received at the cleaner's hands—with which he is naturally very indignant.

On the 12th of December we find him settled at Kensington again, working at three pictures for the Academy:

"The one," he says, "is Dr. Baillie's." (This must be *Duncan Gray*, or the *Refusal*). "The other *A Scene of Sheep-washing*, from a sketch I made in Wiltshire. The *Breakfast-party* I am now at work upon, and have got far advanced with it. With regard to the *Sheep-washing*, it is of course, being a landscape, entirely new to me. I certainly wish to get practice and to obtain some kind of proficiency in this way; but my ambition is not more than that of enabling myself to paint an out-door scene with facility, and in no respect whatever to depart from my own line."

Sir George Beaumont, in reply, quite approves of Wilkie's giving some of his attention to landscape.

In 1817, he finished his picture of the *Breakfast*, for the Marquis of Stafford, who paid him 400 guineas for it, that is 50 guineas in excess of the price agreed upon. Wilkie himself was pleased with the result in this picture, which he thought would "make an impression, but I almost grudge the long time it has taken me." He adds, that the print from the *Rent Day* had just been published, and had a large sale. He was now busy preparing studies for the great picture of the *Chelsea Pensioners*, and also for the *Penny Wedding*, and in August he took a tour in Scotland, and sought inspiration in the scenes of his student days. His letters to his sister are always long and interesting and full of admirably graphic description of the scenes and adventures

of his journey. In Edinburgh he saw Holyrood House and the apartments of Queen Mary—at Borrowstounness Dugald Stewart of Kinneill House found out for him “an old farmhouse with a cradle chimney,” of the fashion of two hundred years ago. Kinneill House itself

“Had a number of haunted rooms, where the country people have a tradition about a Lady Lilburn, who once lived in them, and from something strange in her history is supposed to visit them still, and has been seen, it is said, sailing through the clouds at no very distant date.”

Wilkie says he felt as if he had the imagination of Mrs. Radcliffe, but he stopped there two nights, and met with no supernatural experiences. He visited from this place the palace and church of Linlithgow, about three miles off, both of which, he says, conspire with Holyrood House to show the magnificence of the Scottish kings. His genuine interest in the historical monuments of his country is commented on by Cunningham, who remarks, that he made good use of these remembrances when he painted the *Visit of George the Fourth to Holyrood*, and the *Escape of Queen Mary from Lochleven Castle*, from the scenery that had been familiar to him from the cradle.

His letters from Bute are full of vivid descriptions of the quasi-patriarchal system of life that he found established on the island, where he found models admirably suited to his purpose among the herring fishers and their families. He is sure that he has found there the original of old Edie Ochiltree.

His host and he made tempestuous passages across to the mainland of Argyllshire and got in returning “a pretty good ducking, which, however, has done neither of us any harm,” and finally, among other invitations, one of which was from the Duke of Athol, he received a very cordial letter from Sir Walter Scott describing the inducements of scenery and “old jockies with one foot in the grave” that Abbotsford might offer to his pencil.

Wilkie continued his tour to Inverary where he says "there is very genteel society." And from there, in a boat crowded with "a motley crew of Highland shearers come from the Hebrides, to the amount of two hundred persons, on their way to the Low Country harvest," who played bagpipes, and sang Gaelic coronachs, or danced, all the way, to Lochgilphead on Loch Fyne, where he was met by Mr. Macneill of Oakfield at whose house he made another stay. Here he got a *whisky-still* to study from, which was the original of that in the picture finished in 1819 for Sir Willoughby Gordon. "The men who kept the still," says Wilkie, "could not speak English, and the only interpreter I had was a breekless halfin, who attended me to carry colours."

On the 31st August he writes to his sister :—

"I started again with my gig, and passed along the banks of Loch Lomond to Luss. I could not see much of the scenery as it was getting dark ; but there was something delightful to me in this twilight travelling. The continued murmuring of the lake with its wooded islands, the dark purple mountains, and a straw cottage with an occasional light beaming through its window, give a degree of beauty and cheerfulness to a scene of a commonplace kind by the light of day. With respect to Loch Lomond, however, it can disappoint no one. Everything about it is magnificent. The hills are large—Ben Lomond tremendous. He fills with his base an immense territory, and is opposed on the other side by Ben Voirlich and the Cobbler mountain, all of them crowding so much upon one another that they seem to leave no space for the lake to intercept them."

Wilkie seldom indulges in descriptions of mere natural scenery apart from the works of man—as Cunningham says,

"The social aspect of man Wilkie loved more than the savage aspect of nature, and he made much of this tour rather in obedience to the counsels of Scott than from a desire of his own to see heathery mountains and rocky glens."

After a stay of three days with General Graham at Stirling, he continued his tour to Blair Athol, through Killiecrankie pass, "where Claverhouse lost his life in the moment of

victory," to the Bridge of Tilt, and next day to visit the Duke of Athol at Blair. He found the Duke busy deer-stalking, and sketched a dead deer with some of the game-keepers about it, "who have all got kilts, and are very picturesque characters."

Hence, after a visit to his home at Cupar, he sets out in October to Melrose "to visit Mr. Walter Scott, with whom I expect to be much pleased."

He arrived at Abbotsford in the middle of October, in time for a grand cattle show, and a feast of tenants at Bowhill, at the Duke of Buccleuch's, and a fox hunt "after Dandie Dinmont's fashion," among the rocks of the Yarrow. The Sheriff attended *with his tail on*; and Wilkie too went with him. It was on this occasion that the meeting took place between Wilkie and the Ettrick Shepherd, described by Mr. Laidlaw, who accompanied Wilkie on the visit one fine harvest morning.

"The cottage which Hogg at that time inhabited had been the *but* and *ben* of the former tenant, and he dwelt in the kitchen, for it was the preferable part; but the kitchen was large and roomy, and better lighted than such abodes used to be then, and was moreover wonderfully clean. The kettle was hanging over a cheerful peat fire, and soon began to simmer; and James, then a bachelor, despatched a shepherdess to borrow some loaf-bread to which she added some kneaded cake.

"I had not introduced Wilkie as an artist, and it is probable Hogg had taken him (as he did a great poet) for a horse-couper; he, however, turned suddenly to me, exclaiming 'Laidlaw! this is no the great Mr. Wilkie?' 'It's just the great Mr. Wilkie, Hogg,' I replied. 'Mr. Wilkie,' exclaimed the shepherd, seizing him by the hand, 'I cannot tell how proud I am to see you in my house, and how glad I am to see you are so young a man.'

Washington Irving describes a visit that he paid with Scott to a quarry, where they met a "tall straight old fellow with a healthful complexion and silver hair, and a small round crowned white hat," who paused from his labour, like his companions, to have a "crack wi' the laird." Scott asked

him for a pinch of snuff, and the old man drew forth a horn snuff-box. "Hoot, man," said Scott, "not that old mull; where's the bonnie French one that I brought you from Paris?" "Troth, your honour," replied the old fellow, "sic a mull as that is nae for week-days." This old man was a great favourite with Scott, and his "straight, erect person, his ruddy yet rugged countenance, his grey hair, and an arch gleam in his blue eyes" reminded Irving of the description of Edie Ochiltree. His portrait is introduced by Wilkie in his picture of the Scott family.

Wilkie writes at this time:—

"I have been making a little group while here of Mr. Scott, Mrs. Scott, and all the family, with Captain Ferguson and some other characters. They are so pleased with it that it has been taken to the Duke of Buccleuch's when a request was made that I would paint a picture of the same kind of the Duke; but as this was going out of my line entirely, I felt it necessary to decline." He adds, "I have never been in any place where there is so much real good humour and merriment. There is nothing but amusement from morning till night; and if Mr. Scott is really writing *Rob Roy* it must be while we are sleeping. He is either out planting trees, superintending the masons, or erecting fences the whole of the day. He goes frequently out hunting, and this morning there was a whole cavalcade of us out with Mr. and Miss Scott hunting hares."

It would be surely excusable to stray from our subject for a time, under the charm of Wilkie's present surroundings, and especially of the inimitable easy flow of Irving's gossiping relation, but the matter relates rather to the biography of Scott than to his visitors, though the companionship, the scenery, the legends and associations of Abbotsford, must have borne fruit in a mind like Wilkie's, and left their impression upon his subsequent work.

"Not long after my departure from Abbotsford," says Irving, "my friend Wilkie arrived there to paint a picture of the Scott family. He found the house full of guests. Scott's whole time was taken up in riding and driving about the country, or in social conversation at home.

'All this time,' said Wilkie to me, 'I did not presume to ask Mr. Scott to sit for his portrait, for I saw he had not a moment to spare ; I waited for the guests to go away, but as fast as one went another arrived, and so it continued far several days, and with each set he was completely occupied. At length all went off and we were quiet. I thought, however. Mr. Scott will now shut himself up among his books and papers, for he has to make up for lost time ; it won't do for me to ask him now to sit for his picture. Laidlaw, who managed his estate came in, and Scott turned on him, as I supposed, to consult about business. "Laidlaw," said he, "to-morrow morning we'll go across the water, and take the dogs with us—there's a place where I think we shall be able to find a hare !" 'In short,' added Wilkie 'I found that instead of business he was thinking only of amusement, as if he had nothing in the world to occupy him ; so I no longer feared to intrude upon him.'"

Lockhart says : "I am sorry to say that I cannot express much approbation of the representation of Sir Walter, nor indeed are any of the likenesses in that beautiful piece at all satisfactory to me, except only that of Sir Adam Ferguson, which is perfect."

But there is nothing to be added to the following description which Sir Walter himself gives of the picture :—

" This picture has something in it of a domestic character. The idea which our imitable Wilkie adopted was to represent our family group in the garb of south-country peasants, supposed to be concerting a merry-making, for which some of the preparations are seen. The place is the terrace near Hayside, commanding an extensive view towards the Eildon hills.

" 1. The sitting figure, in the dress of a miller, I believe, represents Sir Walter Scott, author of a few score of volumes, and proprietor of Abbotsford in the county of Roxburgh. 2. In front and presenting, we may suppose, a country wag somewhat addicted to poaching, stands Sir Adam Ferguson, Knight, keeper of the Regalia of Scotland. 3. In the background is a very handsome old man, upwards of eighty-four years old at the time, painted in his own character of shepherd. He also belonged to the numerous clan of Scott. He used to claim credit for three things unusual among the Southland shepherds, first, that he had never been 'fou' in the course of his life ; secondly, he never had struck a man in anger ; thirdly, that though entrusted by his master with the management of large sales of stock, he had never lost a penny for his master by a bad debt. He died soon afterwards at Abbotsford. 4, 5, 6. Of the three female figures, the elder is the late regretted mother of the family represented.

5. The young person most forward in the group is Miss Sophia Charlotte Scott, now Mrs. John Gibson Lockhart; and 6, her younger sister, Miss Ann Scott. Both are represented as ewe-milkers with their leykins, or milk-pails. 7. On the left hand of the shepherd, the young man holding a fowling-piece is the eldest son of Sir Walter, now captain of the King's Hussars. 8. The boy is the youngest of the family, Charles Scott, now of Brazen-nose College, Oxford.

"The dogs were distinguished favourites of the family; the large one was a staghound of the old Highland breed, called Maida, and one of the handsomest dogs that could be found; it was a present from the Chief of Glengary to Sir Walter, and was highly valued, both on account of his beauty, his fidelity, and the great rarity of breed. The other is a little Highland terrier called Cruishe (goblin), of a particular kind bred in Kintail. It was a present from the Honourable Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie, and is a valuable specimen of a race which is now also scarce."

I have before me a satirical piece of this date (1815) called "THE REJECTED PICTURES, &c., with Descriptive Sketches of the Several Compositions by some Ci-devant and other Cognoscenti: (*Being a Supplement to the Royal Academy Catalogue of 1815.*) To which are added a Few of the Secret Reasons for their Rejection. By a distinguished Member of the Hanging Committee. Motto: 'The Devil finds some mischief still for idle hands to do!'—DR. WATTS."

In this squib a picture is described of *A Scene at Epsom Races—after the manner of Wilkie*, on which the criticism is :—

"This artist, like many others, believes he completely imitates Mr. Wilkie when he puts low characters into ludicrous situations. He forgets that looking into the recesses of the human heart, that accurate delineation of simple humour and powerful feeling, which has placed Mr. W. among the most thinking artists of our nation. We have no desire to compare this gentleman with Hogarth, they do not move in parallel lines: the one is the historian of artificial society, with all its evil passions and habits, disgraces and miseries; the other devotes his pencil to the unconstrained and artless expressions of joy, grief, love, affection, modesty, and presumption which burst out through the light drapery of rustic life. Mr. Wilkie always produces some pleasing and improving sympathy, and yet he has been compared to Teniers, that eternal painter of drunken

boors. Most heartily do we wish that he had the colouring of the Dutch school ; but in all that regards the choice of subject and the interest of composition, we should as soon think of preferring Skelton to Crabbe in poetry, as of degrading Mr. Wilkie by such a comparison."

The learned in bibliography may be able to name the writer of the above, which looks like a fountain head of many more modern rills of criticism ; it is signed **OPIFER**.





## CHAPTER V.

1818 to 1827.

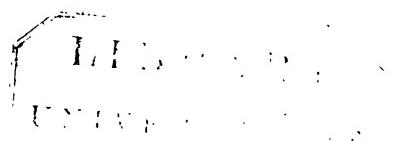
THE "CHELSEA PENSIONERS"—THE KING'S VISIT TO EDINBURGH  
—HAYDON IN PRISON—HUMOROUS CATALOGUE — MISFOR-  
TUNES AND FAILURE OF HEALTH—FOREIGN TRAVEL.

WILKIE'S pictures in the Academy for 1818 were the *Scott Family* and the *Errand Boy* (painted for Sir John Swinburne, Bart.). In October of the same year he finished the *Penny Wedding* for the Prince Regent, and took it to Kensington Palace.

For Mr. Samuel Dobree, who was composing a gloomy work entitled the "Book of Death," descriptive of the dying moments of distinguished men, he painted a small picture of the last act of the life of Sir Philip Sidney, when he orders the water which his friends offered him to be given to a wounded soldier, saying, "His necessity is greater than mine;" this work Raimbach, at his own request, engraved. In January, 1819, he sent two pictures to the British Gallery—the *China Menders* (which he sold for 100 guineas, after asking 130), and a little picture of *Nymphs gathering Grapes*, which was left unsold. The *Whisky Still*, a reminiscence of his Scotch excursion, was finished in March, and bought by Sir Willoughby Gordon for 120 guineas. He was frequently at Ditton making portraits of the Duke of Buccleuch, and of the Dowager Duchess, "a very fine old



*agent.*



U N I V

lady." And the Duke of Wellington began to exhibit a very active interest in the *Chelsea Pensioners*, suggesting alterations, mentioning what he liked and disliked ; " he wished to have in the picture more of the soldiers of the present day, instead of those I had put of half a century ago."

The *Chelsea Pensioners reading the Gazette of the Batt'e of Waterloo* commenced in 1817, was completed in 1821, and appeared in the Academy exhibition of the following year. The excitement that it created is said to have been indescribable. Like the *Village Politicians*, it touched the chord to which the heart of the nation was vibrating, and all classes of society, " young and old, rich and poor, crowded to see it ; soldiers hurried from drill, and pensioners hobbled on their crutches, whilst the heroes who are represented in it were recognised and proclaimed with a shout of delight."

It is the opinion of John Burnet that in the *Chelsea Pensioners* we have an example of Wilkie's *second manner*, in which he has attained the excellences of Teniers and Ostade in combination.

" In producing this combination, he always (in repeated glazings and repaintings, to get the richness of the flesh and the expression of the character) revived the pearly tints and reserved his sharp touching to the last."

" This combination of styles must be carried on, however, from the beginning of the work, otherwise they will not unite ; and a picture of Teniers, though glazed by Ostade himself, would not exhibit the excellences of either. Some of Wilkie's own works are samples of this : as in after life, when his eye required a richness and fulness of effect, he seldom got an early picture into his possession without going over it, and as this enriching was not anticipated in the first instance, they were not capable of undergoing the treatment. I remember seeing one lately, the small picture of the *Jew's Harp*, now in the possession of Colonel Wells, of Redleaf. Wilkie and the late William Collins being on a visit at Redleaf, Wilkie got this small work on his easel, and went entirely over it with rich vehicle and glazing ; the consequence was that the delicate touching, sharpness, and silvery tones were entirely swallowed up in a flood of meguylp."

"As in his *first* manner he imitated *Teniers*, so in his *second* his eye led him into the richer tones of Adrian Ostade, whose colouring was entirely in another key." (*Burnet.*)

Early in July, 1822, Wilkie set out with his friend, William Collins, for Edinburgh, where Collins went to get married and Wilkie to work at his great picture of *John Knox*, then in hand for the Earl of Liverpool. The relations between Collins and Wilkie dated from their common student days and were of the most affectionate character. Collins, like Haydon and others, had his own very *subjective* daily journal, and his record of Wilkie is full of interest. It is from his memoirs, compiled by Wilkie's eminent godson, that I venture to extract the following:—

"I recollect Wilkie taking a cumbersome sketch in oil, for the picture of *John Knox* (now Sir Robert Peel's) all the way to Edinburgh, for Sir Walter Scott's opinion. I was present when he showed it to him; Sir Walter was much struck with it, as a work of vast and rare power.

"Those who are exclusive admirers of his early style ought not to forget this picture, and Lord Lansdowne's *Monks at Confession*, *Columbus*, painted for Mr. Holford, Mr. Rice's picture of *Benvenuto Cellini*, Mr. Marshall's *Pope and Bonaparte*, *The Peep-o'-day Boy's Cabin* at Mr. Vernon's, and many others, upon which his claims to the character of an historical painter may well be founded. I should scruple not to maintain that such pictures as the *Distraining for Rent* at Redleaf with all the pathos of a Raphael; and such exquisite touches of the deepest sentiment as are to be found in the woman squeezing her way to look at the list of the dead and wounded, in the *Waterloo* picture belonging to the Duke of Wellington, are standing evidences of his fitness for the highest departments of Art; although the figures are not dressed in the toga so lavishly bestowed upon the wooden perpetrations of many a Carlo Maratti and a Vanderwerf."

Sir Walter Scott was at this time staying at Edinburgh, in the hot bustle of preparation for the reception of King George the Fourth, of which Wilkie made the celebrated picture so tardily finished (in 1830). Great political consequence attached to this visit of the king, who was the first prince of his house to "touch the soil of Scotland," says Lockhart;

"except one whose name had ever been held there in universal detestation — the cruel conqueror of Culloden — the butcher Cumberland."

The journey of the friends towards this scene of festivity was "all hilarity," and Wilkie wrote to his sister :—

"The only subject of regret was that Geddes' snuff was done by the time we got to Berwick. I was not asked to join; but the box passed between Geddes and Collins, and from Collins to Geddes, incessantly.

"I sallied out with Collius at once to deliver our letters. The Lord Chief Commissioner has been most kind, and with him we went to see the preparations at Holyrood House, which are very fine, and the preparations at Leith for the landing which Collins is much interested about.

"I saw Captain Ferguson at the palace who was in great glee. He told me 'the laird' (Sir W. Scott) expected me, and that he will do everything he can for me.

"Collins has got a new coat, which he has been sporting to-day; but I tell him to wait till my sky-blue comes to hand, and I shall then be a match for him.

"D. W."

Wilkie himself neither smoked nor took snuff; or, as Mr. Collins says, "It was never his to woo the balmy influence of companionable snuff, or to rejoice with the world-wide brotherhood of the contemplative and peace-compelling pipe!"

Sir Walter Scott, to whose personal influence and zeal Lockhart attributes the King's final decision to visit Scotland, and the success of the programme of the reception, did not forget Wilkie in the bustle, although he had as many parts to play as ever tasked the Protean genius of his friend Matthews, of which "the severest," says his biographer, "was that of *stage manager*."

The local magistrates, bewildered and perplexed with the rush of novelty, threw themselves on him for advice and direction about the merest trifles; and he had to arrange everything, from the ordering of a procession to the cut of a button and the embroidering of a cross.

In the composition of the picture of the *King's Reception at*

*Holyrood*, which Wilkie describes in a letter to his sister as happening on a very fine day, while Collins speaks of the *heavy rain* in which the King stood bowing “in the most graceful manner” for upwards of ten minutes, exceptional difficulties arose :—

“ His Majesty, when the first sketch of the picture was laid before him, and he was asked how he stood when the keeper of the palace presented the key : ‘ Stood ! ’ said his Majesty, ‘ not as I stand there, but thus : ’ and he set his foot forward, threw his body back, put on ‘ a martial and swashing outside,’ and said, ‘ There ! ’ ‘ The painter,’ says Cunningham, ‘ who had made the King receive the royal key with a simple and easy grace, was obliged, in courtesy, to abandon the monarch of his own fancy, for the more affected attitude which royalty did really assume on this occasion.’ ”

Of the rest of the festivities, amidst which Wilkie (says Collins) forgot his discretion in his “new sky-blue coat,” there is an excellent account in Lockhart’s life of Sir Walter Scott—and in the journal of the poet Crabbe, who was present “dressed in the highest style of professional neatness and decorum, with buckles in his shoes, and whatever was then considered as befitting an English clergyman of his years and station,” and who records his sense of the honour that he thought it :—

“ That Glengarry even took notice of me, for there were those, and gentlemen too, who considered themselves honoured by following his train. There were also Lord Errol, and the Macleod, and the Fraser, and the Gordon, and the Fergusson ; and I conversed with Lady Glengarry, and did almost believe myself a harper, or bard rather—for harp I cannot strike ; and Sir Walter was the life and soul of the whole. It was a splendid festivity, and I felt I know not how much younger.”

This is written of the dinner of the 15th of August in Castle Street. On the Sabbath the excited city sunk to decorum and silence, and, says Crabbe, “The silence of Edinburgh on the Sunday is in itself devout.” At another party at Sir Walter Scott’s, says Mr. Collins :—

“ Wilkie and Collins beheld the appearance of the author of *Waverley*

in a new character. When the table was cleared after dinner, Sir Walter, in the exuberance of his loyalty and hospitality, volunteered to sing his own song—‘Carle, now the King’s come.’ The whole company gave the chorus, and their host, regardless alike of his lameness and his dignity, sprang up, and calling upon everybody to join hands, made his guests dance with him round the table to the measure of the tune.”

*Desipere in loco*, in those days required care and discretion when so universal a practice of writing up recording journals prevailed amongst the autobiographers present!

Wilkie brought home with him the materials for the royal picture and the *John Knox*; for the latter a drawing of the old pulpit in which the reformer preached, which was discovered for him in a cellar.

It was in 1822 that Edward Irving first came to London from Glasgow, under the auspices of Dr. Chalmers. His preachings created a *furore*, and Wilkie went to hear him: “tall, athletic, and sallow, arrayed in the scanty robe of the Scotch divines, displaying a profusion of jet-black glossy hair reaching to his shoulders, which were ample,” Irving unconsciously sat to Wilkie for the study of *John Knox*. “He had a singular obliquity,” we are told, “in one of his eyes” (squinted, in fact), “and a stern, calm solemnity of aspect, somewhat debased by an expression of austere pride and conscious sanctity.” At Irving’s chapel of the Caledonian Asylum, Wilkie also, with a party of friends including Sir Thomas Lawrence, went to hear Dr. Chalmers, and says of him that “with all disadvantages of voice, manner, figure, and action, he seemed to get hold of the attention, and carry it along with him from first to last; and, with qualities that seem calculated for anything but eloquence, he produced the effect of eloquence the most striking.”

At this time poor Haydon, whose affairs had been all the year going from bad to worse, was landed in the King’s Bench Prison; and although the friends say little of each other in their diaries, it is proved that Wilkie, in the

measure of his means, had been continually assisting him by bills and other resources.

"It is pleasant," says his biographer, "to find so many proofs of substantial sympathy in the letters Haydon received during his confinement. Lord Mulgrave, Sir Edward Codrington, Mr. Brougham, Sir Walter Scott, Barnes (of *The Times*), and his fast friend Miss Mitford were all prompt and helpful. His active friend and physician Dr. Darling, with Sir George Beaumont, Wilkie, and others as practically benevolent, bought at the sale many of his casts, prints, and painting materials, that he might have a nucleus for beginning work upon on coming out of prison."

But his necessities were a bottomless gulf, and the more friends spontaneously gathered round him in misfortune, the more he loved to create fresh enemies, and provoke for himself new misfortunes. His intimacy with Wilkie, however, was never interrupted, and we find records of it to the end of Wilkie's life.

Wilkie's works in the Exhibition of 1823 were the *Parish Beadle*, a *Portrait of the Duke of York*, and an unimportant drawing in chalk.

The *Parish Beadle*, bequeathed by Lord Colborne to the National Gallery, was seen by Sir Robert Peel on the easel, and he said he would like a subject as near that as possible. Wilkie's dog is on this occasion dressed up as a lady for his part in the performance of the unhappy company of travelling performers under the beadle's hands, and is not the least pathetic figure in the composition. Waagen says that here "we have an astonishing force of colour, a brilliant lighting, and a thoroughly careful and solid execution. Inscribed and dated 1823, which shows that it belongs to the earlier period of the master."

Besides the two great pictures of *John Knox* and the *Holyrood Reception*, which were destined to occupy their share of his time for several years still, Wilkie, in the autumn of 1823, painted the *Portrait of Lord Kellie* for the town-hall of Cupar, drew an old Greenwich pensioner, under

the character of Smollett's *Commodore Trunnion*, and a scene from Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, which he called the *Cottage Toilet*. He also painted the *Smugglers offering Run Goods for Sale* for Sir Robert Peel, and the *Highland Family* for Sir George Beaumont. The subject of the *Smugglers Alarmed*, as it was at first called, was suggested, Raimbach says, by the recent occurrence of the capture and trial of a band of notorious freebooters. Sir Robert introduced and accompanied the artist to Newgate, in furtherance of his study from nature and truth; the basis of his art, and his invariable practice.

The last picture he exhibited before he left England (1825) was an exquisite specimen of his talent, a *Highland Family*, painted for the Earl of Essex; and he had made some admirable studies and sketches for pictures which have never been completed; particularly one of a *School*, and one of the *Arrival of a Rich Relation*.

A humorous critical catalogue to the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1824, in which each Academician is greeted with an appropriate epigram, illustrates the public criticism on Wilkie's progress at this time. He is the first mentioned R.A. who advances to receive the greeting of the Muse:—

“ Thus spoke the dame, then took her seat,  
Each R.A. with a smile to greet.  
WILKIE with Scotia's caution came,  
And met a lecture from the dame :—  
'Be all thyself—nor copy ought—  
*Original in style and thought:*  
Nor turn aside, from whims and fears  
To follow Rembrandt or Teniers.”

A foot-note explains. “In last year's Exhibition it will be remembered that Wilkie lost much of his popularity by an attempt to follow in the style of Rembrandt.”

Wilkie's pictures in the catalogue of this year are—No. 110, *Smugglers offering Run Goods for Sale; or, Concealment*; and

115, *Cottage Toilette*, from Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, with the lines quoted—

“ While Peggy laces up her bosom fair,  
With a blue snood Jenny binds up her hair ;  
Glaud by his morning ingle, taks a beek,  
The rising sun shines motty through the reek ;  
A pipe his mouth, the lasses please his een,  
And now and then his joke maun intervene.”

*Act V. Scene 2.*

The critic says, “ It is with extreme regret that we have heard that ill-health has prevented this esteemed artist from presenting the public with other important works. His illness is, we are happy to hear, now so far averted as to afford a hope of his speedily resuming his pallet.”

In the Antique Academy, Wilkie exhibited *A Study for Commodore Trunnion*, which the critic considered “ certainly Mr. Wilkie's best work in the Exhibition, but, after all, a little too much *à la Rembrandt*. “ A word at parting with this favourite artist. His affection for the school of Rembrandt is too conspicuous in his recent works.” Mulready's *Widow*, he adds, is an example for the painters of domestic scenes, both in drawing and colouring.

Mr. Collins gives, in his *Memoirs*, a delightful letter that he received from Wilkie in August, 1823, in which Wilkie congratulates his friend upon his marriage, and deplores his own state of singleness, yet announces in it that his court-dress and his appearance in it at Holyrood had, “ though unavailing with the ladies, not been an idle speculation,” having resulted in his appointment to be “ limner for the king in Scotland.” The letter continues—

“ It will be evident to you now, that we have both made something of our Scottish visit. However I will not put what I have gained in comparison with what you have gained by it. Mrs. Collins will agree with me in this : for, in respect to the improvement in your condition, I am as much behind you as ever. No lady has yet taken compassion upon me—court dress and all together ; and as the time (that is the protracted time)

of twelve months is now at hand, when Mrs. Collins and you are to make out a certificate to warrant the married as an improved state of existence, I must request—as I have no doubt of the certificate being most satisfactory—that you and Mrs. Collins would give me the best advice, not only upon the sort of person to be chosen, but also to inform me by what means such a person as I am may induce a well-chosen lady to hearken unto reason."

But the happiness and prosperity of Wilkie's career appear to have culminated at this date, and from the close of the year 1824, there is a great change in the character of his history, himself, and his work. The first blow that struck him was the death of his mother, on the day before his return from a tour in the north, where he had been received with unusual warmth and honour. Other family misfortunes followed closely, and, under the combined influence of mental trouble and anxiety and excessive application to his work, he fell into an illness, for the relief of which his physicians ordered him to Cheltenham.

"The year 1824," says Cunningham, "closed darkly on the social prospects of Wilkie. The health of his brother James had received a shock which soon brought him to the grave: his mother, who, in the language of his native land loved him like her 'tae ee,' was removed, after a long illness, from the circle which she brightened with her cheerful temper; his sister was doomed to see the man of her choice, whose bride she was to be *on the morrow*, drop down and die at her side, after a few short weeks of severe suffering; the commercial embarrassments of the times, which threatened to extinguish all national enterprise, had wound their toils round the fortunes of his younger brother; while, closing the rear of this melancholy file came the artist himself: his health shaken, and his hopes of independence darkened, if not blighted."

Mrs. Wilkie was buried at Kensington. Her funeral was attended by her two sons, David and Thomas, Sir James McGrigor, Dr. Darling, Mr. Mushet, Mr. Stodart, Mr. Young, Mr. Raimbach, and others. "The shock of his mother's death under such painful circumstances," says Raimbach, "had a most distressing effect upon Wilkie's health. A slow, consuming malady fell upon his nerves, and after a time rendered him

quite incapable of practising his art. The highest surgical and medical skill was of course available to him, but," &c. It is painful, in reading the accounts of the last illnesses of David's father and mother and of his own treatment, to observe the extent to which they were each of them subjected to bleeding, blistering, and leeches.

He went to Paris in July, and there fell into the hands of a Dr. Benet, who ordered, in the words of his cousin, Mr. Lister, "leeches to each of his feet: *they bled well.*" Then next day, "Mr. Wilkie complains of weakness, and of the same results of bleeding as formerly, when it was done at Cheltenham, depriving him of the power of directing his attention to one object for any length of time." "Rather in low spirits," says poor Wilkie's friend, "and much inclined to contravene the orders of Benet." "Not the slightest benefit has been derived from the *vegetable diet*, and it has now been tried for *ten days!*" Wilkie remained in the dangerous society of the Paris doctors for more than a month, and went off at last in spite of their objection. His letters soon recover their tone of lively observation, and, he says, "My health has not suffered in the least" (from the journey). He rightly argues, that if he were not better he "could not have written so long a letter;" and it is very noticeable how steadily his powers of observation and appreciation awaken as he travels away from the doctors, and through the pure mountain air and wonderful scenery of the Alps. The route taken by the travellers was across the Simplon (then a recent work, which Wilkie rightly valued as one "which for obstacles overcome seems to exceed all that human industry has yet accomplished, and perhaps, as an evidence of power, is greater than anything else that Napoleon has left behind") through Milan, which "does not present much for the artist," to Genoa, Pisa, where he describes the eccentric Giotto's works in the Campo Santo as "most curious, resembling in rudeness

of colour, of drawing, of perspective, and even of composition, the drawings of the Chinese and the Hindoos ;" but, "as they advance, greater elegance and freedom are observed. In some even the most extravagant freaks of the imagination discovering a kindred resemblance to the great works that followed, and in some instances thoughts and fancies that may have prompted the happiest efforts of Raphael and Michael Angelo."

In another letter to his friend W. Collins, from Rome, he says :—

"The only art pure and unsophisticated and that is worth study and consideration by an artist, or that has the true object of art in view, is to be found in the works of those masters who *revived* and *improved* the art, and those who ultimately brought it to perfection. These seem alone, whatever their talent was, to have addressed themselves to the common sense of mankind. From Giotto to Michelangelo, expression and sentiment seem the first thing thought of; while those that followed seem to have allowed technicalities to get the better of them, until, simplicity giving way to intricacy, they appear to have painted more for the artist and the connoisseur than for the untutored apprehensions of ordinary men."

The whole of the rest of this letter is taken up with similar admirable expressions of his judgment of the great masters. Of the Raphaels in Rome he says, "They have more excellences addressed to *the unlearned observers* than any works I know of. When in the freshness of their first existence they must have been most attractive to *the common people*, which, I doubt, is more than could have been said for Titian or Rubens." The works of Michelangelo "grew upon him with overpowering influence," and he differs from those who "apologise for his colouring," and finds between him and Sir Joshua Reynolds an affinity, "not only in the high aim, the something unattainable, and the profound feeling for the indescribable thoughts of the inward man, but even in the more obvious qualities of light and shadow and colour."

Of all that Wilkie saw in Rome it was evident that the

*Last Judgment*, of the Sistine Chapel, was the work that astonished and delighted him the most. His journal speaks with greater enthusiasm of this than even of Raphael's works :—

"The first impression of the ceiling was an effect of greyness ; but this gradually wore off, and the *Last Judgment* itself, from the deep blue background, the rich tone of the flesh, and the brown shadows, giving to the figures great rotundity and relief, produced upon my eye an effect of great grandeur. We proceeded to examine the groups in detail with the anxiety of those who are sure of a high treat. We got upon a high scaffolding, half way up the picture ; here Phillips, Hilton, Cook, and I stood, holding by each other's shoulders, for an hour. The group opposite was a number of men driven down by the angels on the right-hand side of the picture. They looked as if they were all alive, writhing with mental and bodily pain, like the work of a demon who exulted in human misery. As an instance of Michelangelo's power, the combination of mind and science seemed here greater than anything I had ever witnessed. . . . It is painted with more body and finish, and perhaps even with more delicacy than the *Stanze* of Raphael, and with more dexterity than any other artist could do that ever lived."

The colouring he describes as "of first-rate quality, remote from all that is gaudy, flimsy, white, or meretricious ; *lurid* and *terrific*, if you will, but never disagreeable."

Finally, the companions point out the heads and figures, groups and hues of colour, in this great work, which the works of Reynolds resemble ; and agree that Sir Joshua was sincere when he wished that "the name of Michelangelo might be among the last words that he uttered from the chair of the Academy."

Nothing can exceed the importance that is attributed by John Burnet to the impressions received by Wilkie at Rome. They influenced all his subsequent work. Titian and Correggio were his great authorities for colour ; and, writing from Parma of the *Ascension of the Virgin* by Correggio, he calls it the most original of all the works he had seen of this great master, and says :—

"The public gallery here has five pictures by Correggio, of which three are of quality sufficient to form each the attraction of any collection; but the famous *St. Jerome* (or *The Day*) takes the lead; this, for force, richness, beauty and expression makes everything give way. Hundreds of copies have been made—but all poor, compared with the fearless glazings, the impasted bituminous shadows of this picture. *Yet who that could paint like this would venture to exhibit at Somerset House!*"

But of Titian he says, that he "seems here *lost and alone in addressing himself to the thinking part of our nature.*"

During his residence in Rome Wilkie painted several pictures possessing the qualities observable in the works around him, of which the *Confessional*, and the *Pifferari playing hymns to the Madonna*, are the most important. "In these works," says Burnet, "he seems to have endeavoured to combine the softness and rotundity of Correggio with the strength and severity of Raffaelle."

Nothing in Rome surprised Wilkie more than the profusion of sculptors. Of Canova he wrote with enthusiasm. His pre-eminence, he said, was due, not to his purity of form, not to his dexterity in working marble, nor to his skill and experience in composition, but to the perfect expression of thought and sentiment which gave intelligence to every head, and life and grace to every limb. Of the works of Thorwaldsen he said, that he neglected that in which Canova excelled—human character and expression. The faces attract less than the flesh, and the flesh and limbs less than the draperies.

"Thomas Moore's Diary tells of an anecdote by Eastlake of a dinner given to Thorwaldsen the sculptor, at Rome, Wilkie presiding in the chair and making a very eloquent speech upon the occasion, which it seems, says Moore, he is very capable of, though so tiresomely slow of words in society. In speaking of Thorwaldsen, he described him as 'coming from the North to warm the marbles of the South with his genius;' and the poetical flight being very much applauded, Thorwaldsen, who sat next to Eastlake, begged that he would interpret it to him. 'He speaks of you,' said Eastlake, 'as a great artist, *chi e venuto dal settentrione per riscaldar*

*i marmi' 'Eiscaldar i marmi!*' exclaimed Thorwaldsen, puzzled at the metaphor, '*che vuol dire?*' '*Col suo genio,*' continued Eastlake, which at once solved the difficulty, and very much to the great sculptor's satisfaction."

Wilkie's correspondence and journal at this time indicate that the ailment which baffled his doctors was accompanied, if not caused, by a condition of nervous exaltation, in which he was receiving deep impressions from his visit to the cradle of the arts. The attention of his biographers must be irresistibly diverted, at this crisis of his life, away from the accidents of his history to the wonderful phenomena of his art-education. Balls, dinners, and other festivities occupied his evenings, and he was surrounded by flattery and kindness. His health continued to give him increasing anxiety, and he described himself as unfit for work; but the vigour of his intellect, and the absorption of his energies in art, are betrayed in every letter that he writes. In one to Sir Robert Peel, of the 13th February, 1826, he resumes, in brief, the substance of his observation of Italian art, "that, from Cimabue to Michelangelo, one common quality distinguishes it, which is 'the desire of making all other excellences tributary to the expression of *thought and sentiment*—an aim alike redeeming to the mean forms of Ostade and Rembrandt, as it is ennobling to the style and beauty of the *Apollo*, the *Madonna della Sedia*, or the *Chapeau de Paille*, but which, as Italian art began to decline, seems to have been the last thing thought of."

On the 25th of February, 1826, the travellers left Rome in a *vettura*, passing through scenes that realised "all that Salvator Rosa conceived or Poussin drew;" and, further on, "the beautiful banks, woody eminences, and blue distant hills of Claude," and arrived at Naples on the 28th. Here he describes the museum pictures, "a great rubbishy collection," with a few gems—the Titian *Venus*, inferior to

that of Florence ; and is most attracted by the Correggios, particularly the *Virgin and Child with the Rabbis*, which he compares to Rembrandt.

He describes fully the impressions that he found in a journey beyond Salerno “to the country in which Salvator studied ;” at Pæstum, in whose immense stones he found no impression of extent or magnificence ; at Pompeii, which impressed him far more deeply, and where he studied minutely the ornamentation of the walls and the colours used upon it. On the crater of Mount Vesuvius he dated some letters home, and on his return to Rome summed up the result of his observations of ancient art at Herculaneum and Pompeii, “that if Greek sculpture remains paramount, yet that Greek painting, as an art, has been decidedly improved upon by the ingenuity of modern times.”

Soon after his return to Rome he learned that his worst fears were realised as to the failure of the publishing firm of Hurst and Robinson, and the consequent disastrous losses to himself and Sir Walter Scott especially ; and mentions on this occasion that his own expenses for the eight months that he had passed abroad had not exceeded 160*l.* Of Sir Walter Scott he heard, from his friend Lady Compton, that “he has frequently felt more annoyance on losing his hat on a windy day, than he now does on losing the greater part of his fortune.”

During his journey from Rome to Venice, he wrote to his friend Andrew Geddes a daily account of his proceedings, and valuable notices upon the art treasures that he looked at *en route*. The letter is given at length in an interesting volume, published by the Bannatyne Club, of *etchings* by Wilkie and Geddes, of which only a hundred copies were printed. He repeats in it the important observation—“From Giotto to Raphael, while art was looking upwards, it seems only used as a vehicle for story and expression ; but in its decline, from

the Carracci to Mengs, the display of art in all its intricacies seems to take the lead of every other sentiment." With the gallery at Bologna, "more admired than any in Italy," he was disappointed. "It is not the gallery for an artist!" In Parma he remained one morning perched up in a pigeon-hole on the cupola of Correggio, "perhaps," he says, "the most beautiful work I have ever witnessed." In Venice, he was disappointed with the *Assumption of the Virgin* by Titian, "a severely damaged picture, having on the face of it evidence of a complete scouring"; "tremendously powerful," but "with a coarseness unlike other works of this great master." Of Titian's *Peter Martyr*, however, he speaks with reverence, as an example of "all that it is the object of an artist to avoid when painting for the Royal Academy at home." He was much fascinated by this work, and visited it repeatedly—in a dull light, when the impression produced was of "awe and terror"—with the sun shining on it, when he detected the traces of the extent to which the picture, when in Paris, was restored and painted over, and finally by twilight, when he failed to determine which is the principal light in the picture.

In a letter written on his road to Innspruck, he admits that he "passed a very pleasant time" at Venice; and "were it not for the disastrous accounts from home and my own state of health, should have regarded my visit to Venice as a happy conclusion to my Italian journey." Of the Tyrol—the country, the people, and the language, and the new face of things—he speaks with enthusiasm. He is delighted with Innspruck, and especially with the people. At Munich he found the *Reading of the Will* in the place of honour in the royal palace, in a frame designed by the late king:—

"In the room where the jewels, swords, and other articles of value were placed, and where were also the most choice works of art he had acquired, and in a choice situation was placed MY PICTURE, the whole scene and story of which was remarkably in accordance with that which we were now witnessing. Its look and hue gratified me extremely. It is sur-

rounded by a Teniers, a Wouvermans, a Ruysdael, and various other specimens of the Dutch masters; is remarkably in harmony with them, looks rich and powerful, stands its ground well, and, if sold with them, looks as if it would bear as good a price."

The proof engraving of the *Reading of the Will* was received by the late king two days before his death. He appeared to approve of it, and requested that Von Dillis, the Director of the royal gallery at Munich, would get it framed and carry it as a present to the queen. Some days after the death of the king, when the frame was ready, Von Dillis waited upon the queen with the framed engraving, and said, "Madam, the king commanded me to present this to your majesty." The expression of her countenance, Von Dillis said, on seeing the subject of the print is not to be described.

In Saxony Wilkie was struck with the English faces he met. "This is so remarkable that there is scarcely a face—and we meet with many a pretty face—but recalls some one I have seen or known at home." In Dresden he met with great hospitality, learned to smoke, saw *tableaux vivants* for the first time, and discussed the recent death of Weber, who, the Saxons said, was killed by the neglect of the English.

At Toeplitz Wilkie took twenty-four baths, which appear to have done him neither good nor harm. He is all the time longing for what he calls *active* remedies, such as mercury, cupping, or similar strong agencies. From Toeplitz to Carlsbad, where he found a colony of Poles; and thence to Prague, which he calls the capital of the musical world, and where the churches and spires reminded him of Rome and the Vatican, and the bridge is the original of our Waterloo Bridge. He travelled from Prague to Vienna in five days, for the sum of 1*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*, or about 6*s.* 6*d.* a day. At Vienna he dined with Prince Metternich, whose appearance he described as a mixture of the late Lord Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington. In the Belvedere collection he was

chiefly struck with the Dürers, Holbeins, and other early masters, "so perfect in preservation as to teach strongly what style of painting will endure the longest." He found the ten days' mountain journey to Trieste very tedious, and was glad to exchange it for the smooth passage of the Adriatic, by moonlight, to Venice. From Venice, by Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna, across the flinty Apennines to Florence without adventure. From Padua he had for companion an Italian priest, whom he describes as a jolly fellow. "He asked about the Catholics of Ireland, the tunnel under the Thames, the Stuart family, and Flora Macdonald!"

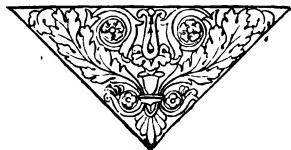
In a letter to Dr. Gillespie, his father's successor at Culz, occurs the following remarkable sentiment:—

"The Church of Rome has been the nurse of the arts, but painting has been its favourite child. The pagans have been better sculptors than the Christians; theirs was a corporeal system, but it was left for painting, with all its undefinable powers over colour and form, over light and darkness, to represent the mysteries of a spiritual revelation. The art of painting seems made for the service of Christianity: *would that the Catholics were not the only sect who have seen its advantages!*"

From Florence Wilkie returned to Rome. There he received, in a quaint and ill-spelt letter, the news that his *Reading of the Will* had been bought for 12,000 florins for the Royal Gallery at Munich, "with a great applause," says Von Dillis, "of the Spectators and Bavarian nation, in the highest degree interesting, and so very flattering, not only for the Artist, but for the Royale munificence and the Whole nation."

The student of Wilkie's life and character should read without abridgment the account of the public dinner that was given to him at Rome by the artists and amateurs of Scotland, at which the Duke of Hamilton presided; and especially the long speech that Wilkie made in returning thanks for the toast of the day. Of equal interest is his

letter to Lady Beaumont upon the occasion of the death of his kind friend and patron; and his letters from Geneva, particularly those to Sir Robert Peel and to William Collins, are full of valuable observations upon art subjects, especially colour. At Geneva he completed the picture of *The Roman Princess washing Pilgrims' Feet*, which was bought by King George for 250 guineas, which created a great sensation at Geneva, and encouraged Wilkie to lay plans for "three other superb subjects admitting of the same treatment."





## CHAPTER VI.

1827 to 1841.

VISIT TO SPAIN—RETURN HOME—"THE KING'S ENTRY INTO HOLYROOD"—"JOHN KNOX PREACHING"—ACADEMY PICTURES.

**I**N November of this year we find Wilkie at Madrid, studying especially the works of Velasquez and Murillo, of whom, with the other painters of the Spanish school—Juan Battista Juannes, Morales, Ribera, and Alonso Cano—he wrote at considerable length to Sir Thomas Lawrence, who replied with his own critical remarks and the following compliment to Wilkie :—

"In subjects of sentiment and feeling, of dramatic variety and passion, no other but your own unequalled union of truth, delicacy, and force can render the subtleties of expression and character, and subdue the mere handicraft of art by the intensity of its nobler aim."

Wilkie's malady of inaction may have been in great part but the brooding over the change of style that he now adopted, and worked upon with much of his old industry recovered. The pictures that he painted during his residence in Madrid were the *Portrait of a Spanish Senhorita*, the *Spanish Posada, or, Guerilla Council of War*, the *Guerilla taking leave of his Confessor*, and the *Maid of Saragossa*. The last three pictures were acquired for the king, at an aggregate

price of 2,000 guineas. In the last picture the likeness of one of the chief figures was that of General Palafox himself, the gallant defender of the place.

"Of the Academy pictures, 1828, the *Defence of Saragossa* was, for its popular subject, the favourite. No event in the course of the Spanish war created such an intense anxiety over the whole of Europe as the gallant defence, inch by inch, of the town of Saragossa ; and the brave, the heroic, the calumniated Palafox has earned an immortality which can never be wrested from him. The figure of this brave man in Wilkie's picture admirably exhibits his lofty daring and indefatigability ; and the devotion of Augustina, who holds the lighted match to fire the weapon that is to sacrifice to her husband's manes is a specimen of dignified sentiment and defiance as powerful as ever was painted by a British artist." [*Gentleman's Magazine*.]

Another critic, in the midst of much praise, finds fault with a want of variety in the heads : the features, with the exception of the boy, seem to be all taken from one model :—the noses are absolutely the same. Haydon thought "the woman in the *Saragossa* is not beautiful."

Washington Irving wrote, in a note to Wilkie, "Whatever you may think, I am persuaded you have gained in health since your residence in Spain : the quantity of work you have done, and the force and high merit of your productions, are proofs of it." Irving and Wilkie were much attached to each other's society ; they had been a great deal together in Madrid, and appointed to meet again in Seville. "We are much together," Wilkie says ; "we can sympathise with each other's pursuits, and discourse in the same tongue about art and literature."

In June, 1828, Wilkie arrived in London, and described the pictures around him. "What I see around me here is dryness, littleness of objects, and multitudes of detail ; the white and the flat light, the poor and the laboured shadow !" This is much what Collins had written to him of the previous year,—"Your absence and poor Sir George Beaumont's death have been taken advantage of, and an unusual supply of chalky pictures adorn the walls of the Academy, to the dis-

comfort of the old school." Hilton, Etty, Lawrence, Mulready, and some others were excepted. In another very pleasant letter from Collins to Wilkie, he alludes to the value of the observations recorded in Wilkie's letters to him, and says that he has taken every opportunity of using them to effect a reformation among the English painters on the subjects; and he adds, "It gratifies me exceedingly to assure you that Lawrence, Mulready, Callicott, Phillips, and others—more especially the three first—declared it to be their united conviction that, 'highly as they had already estimated your powers as an artist and a man of intellect, they were bound to acknowledge that you had surpassed, in the clear and philosophical views of art expressed in that letter, their highest hopes!'" The *Athenæum* criticism upon the painting of Severn's pictures, done under the influence of Wilkie in Rome, was that it was "glowing and mellow; but the flesh is too unvaried a brown, and suggests a caution to our Anglo-Roman artists, while they abandon the crudeness and whiteness so prevalent in England, to be careful to adopt the *true* style of the models," &c.

Wilkie's meeting with Collins is described by his godson as an opportunity when the topics that had been touched upon in their letters were fully discussed by the two painters; and, above all, Wilkie's uppermost anxiety was to send his friend to Italy, to "attempt fresh successes in the land from which Claude and Wilson had drawn their inspirations before him."

Haydon also describes his first meeting with Wilkie at the house of Lord Grosvenor:—

"He was thinner and seemed more nervous than ever; his keen and bushy brow looked irritable, eager, nervous, and full of genius. How interesting it was to meet him at Lord Grosvenor's, where we have all assembled these twenty years under every variety of fortune! Poor Sir George is gone, who used to form one of the group. Wilkie, Seguier, Jackson, and I are left. Lord Mulgrave is ill."

Next month Haydon says—

"Every feeling and theory of Wilkie centres in self. His theory now is no detail, because he finds detail too great an effort for his health. He said he always stopped when he found a difficulty, and never painted anything but what was perfectly easy. This was entirely on account of his health; and because his health was weak, he laid it down as an axiom in art that when you come to a difficulty you should stop! A pretty doctrine to teach a pupil! He said (rightly), 'that behind any object of interest there should be repose and a flat shadow.' He looked gaunt and feeble. God knows what to make of Wilkie's health."

Wilkie had reason to be contented with the reception that his new manner of painting found from the critics, but his personal conviction of the truth of his aim was enough to have made him indifferent to their opinion. With recovered health and energies, he began working very zealously upon his great pictures of the *Entry into Holyrood* and *John Knox*, of the first of which Haydon wrote :—

"This will be a very curious picture. He began it before he went to Italy, when detail and finish were all in all to him. He is finishing it now when he has entirely altered his style. The Duke of Argyll, the king's head, the man on horseback with the crown, are in his first style; the trumpeters, the dress of the Duke of Hamilton, the woman etc., are in his last; and the mixture is like oil and water."

Among the friends who welcomed his return with all their old warmth was Sir Walter Scott, who invited him to "take a bracer in his own climate," which Wilkie accepted. Scott mentioned in his letter that he also "did sometimes feel the same sinking of the heart, or failure of the hand, which afflicted Wilkie." He believed it to be "the penance annexed to the cultivation of those arts which depend on imagination, and which make both painter and poet pay for their ecstatic visions by the sad reality of a disordered pulse and stricken nerves." "In general," said Scott, "I contrive to get rid of it, though the fits must be longer and the gloom deeper as life loses its sources of enjoyment and age claws us

in its clutch. So, according to our old wives' proverb : 'We must just e'en do as we dow!'"

The sudden death of Sir Thomas Lawrence, in the new year, deprived Wilkie of another of his best and most sympathising friends. Wilkie was now appointed "Principal Painter in Ordinary to the King," being already "Limner to the King for Scotland." Raimbach describes the functions of the new office to be the "painting and superintending the sovereign's portraits for state presents to foreign countries, embassies, &c.; for all which the artist is duly paid in addition to the annual stipend of 200*l.*" It was confidently anticipated that Wilkie would be elected to the Presidency of the Academy. Sir Walter Scott, indeed, wrote a letter, before he heard the result of the election, congratulating Wilkie in advance upon his promotion. Haydon describes the election of Sir Martin Shee to have been done in a jealous passion and in the greatest haste. The Academicians, hearing that the king had named Wilkie his Sergeant Painter, feared a royal message to urge them to elect him. The general feeling of surprise is expressed in a once-popular epigram on the subject—

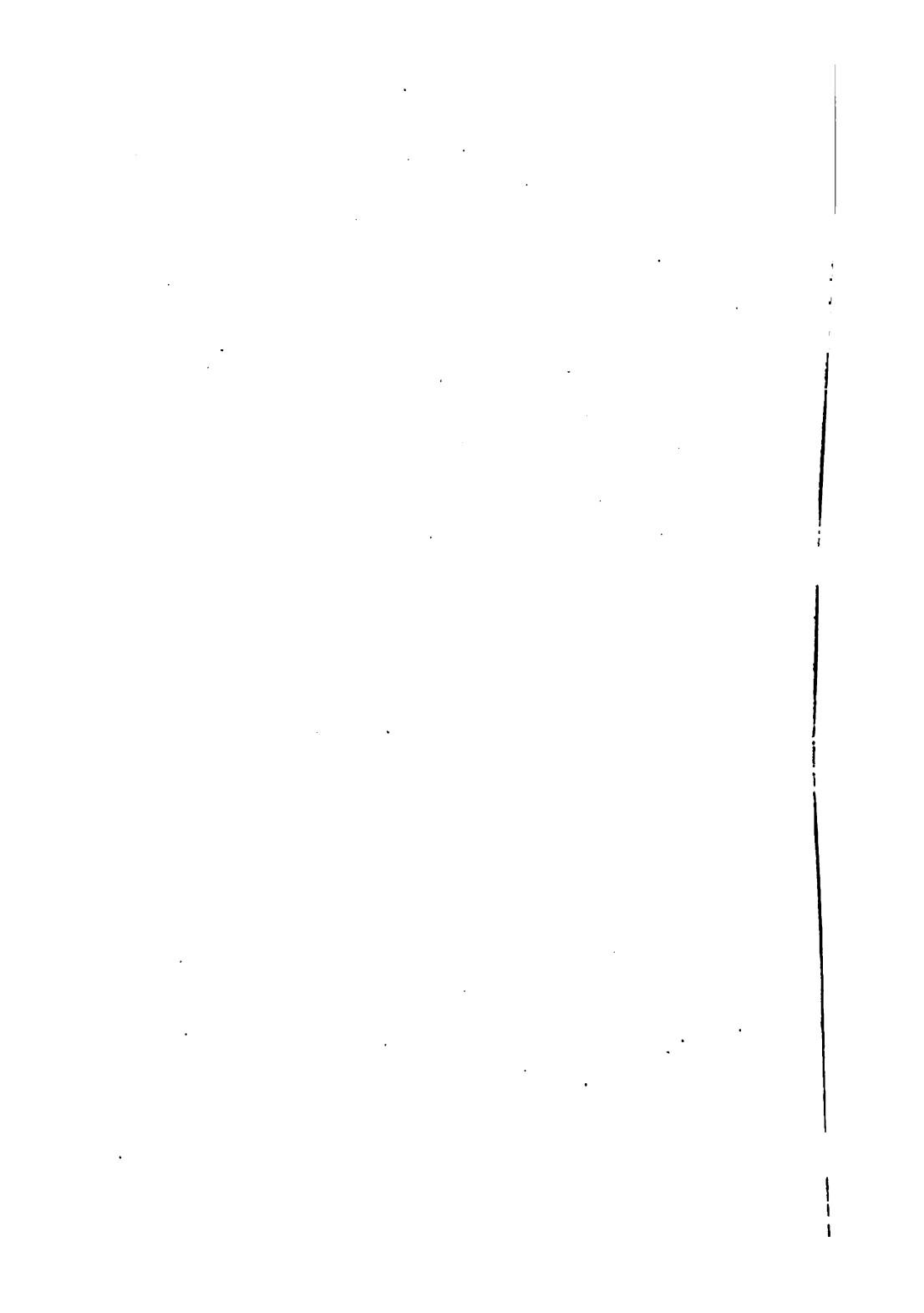
" See Painting crowns her sister Poesy !  
The World is all astonished !—so is *Shee*."

The new President had qualifications for his office in which Wilkie was deficient.

"To steer the academic vessel through the breakers that were visible at more than one point of her course, the future President could not well have been selected on grounds wholly distinct from considerations of personal fitness in reference to the peculiar and, to some extent, abnormal duties which would probably devolve upon him" (*Life of Sir Martin Archer Shee*).

Wilkie cared for none of these things. He was occupied entirely with his work. He writes in great enthusiasm of a Correggio that he brought home with him, in which he

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discovers new minute beauties every day. He says of his Correggio, "It is my school, and I study it as a guide in my own manner of painting."

Extract from the Royal Academy Catalogue for 1830 :—

125. His Majesty King George the Fourth, received by the nobles and people of Scotland, upon his entrance to the Palace of Holyrood House on the 15th August, 1822.

D. WILKIE, R.A.

"We'll show him wit, we'll show him lair,  
With gallant lads and lasses fair ;  
And what wad kind heart wish for mair,  
Carle, now the king's come !"

*Song by Sir Walter Scott.*

"In the principal station of the picture is represented the King accompanied by a page and the exon of the yeomen of the guard, with horsemen behind, announcing by sound of trumpet to all ranks of his expecting subjects, the arrival of the Royal Visitor to the palace of his ancestors.

"In front of His Majesty, the Duke of Hamilton, first peer of Scotland, in the plaid of the Earls of Arran, is presenting the keys of the palace, of which he is hereditary keeper. On the right of the king is the Duke of Montrose, Lord Chamberlain, pointing towards the entrance of the palace, where is stationed the Duke of Argyll, in his family tartan, as hereditary keeper of the household. Behind him is the crown of Robert the Bruce, supported by Sir Alexander Keith, hereditary knight-marshal attended by his esquires with the sceptre and sword of state. Near him is carried the mace of the Exchequer, anciently the Chancellor's mace, when Scotland was a separate kingdom. On the left of the picture, in the dress of the royal archers who served as the King's body-guard, is the late Earl of Hopetoun ; and close to him, in the character of historian or bard, is Sir Walter Scott. These are accompanied by a varied crowd, among whom are some females and children, pressing forward with eagerness to see and to welcome their Sovereign upon this joyous and memorable occasion."

Wilkie's royal patron was the next to be summoned by death. "The marked personal notice he received from George IV., together with the truly princely remuneration of His Majesty's various commissions," said Raimbach, "followed as these were by others from the greatest and noblest in the land, had opened a career to our painter equally

splendid, lucrative, and flattering." On the accession to the throne of William IV., Wilkie was continued in the office of principal painter to his Majesty, and executed as part of its duties some whole-length portraits of the King, and also of the Queen Adelaide. He subsequently painted several of the Duke of Wellington, the Earls of Melville, Montague, &c.

It was not until 1832 that Wilkie completed his picture of *John Knox Preaching*, and sent it to the Academy along with a portrait of the King. The description in the annual catalogue is :—

184. *The Preaching of Knox before the Lords of the Congregation,*  
10th of June, 1559. D. WILKIE, R.A.

"In Dr. M'Crie's life of this extraordinary person is described the event this picture is intended to represent, which took place during the regency of Mary of Guise, in the parish church of St. Andrews in Fifehire, where John Knox, having just arrived from Geneva after an exile of thirteen years, in defiance of a threat of assassination, and while an army in the field was watching the proceedings of his party, appeared in the pulpit and discoursed to a numerous assembly, including many of the clergy, when, 'such was the influence of his doctrine, that the provost, baillies, and inhabitants harmoniously agreed to set up the reformed worship in the town. The church was stripped of all images and pictures, and the monasteries were pulled down.'

"Close to the pulpit, on the right of Knox, are Richard Ballenden, his amanuensis, with Christopher Goodman, his colleague; and in black the Knight Templar, Sir James Sandilands, in whose house at Calder the first Protestant sacrament was received.

"Beyond the latter, in the scholar's cap and gown, is that accomplished student of St. Andrews, the Admirable Crichton. Under the pulpit is Thomas Wood, the precentor with his hour-glass; the school boy below is John Napier, Baron of Merchiston, inventor of the logarithms; and further to the right is a child which has been brought to be baptised when the discourse is over.

"On the other side of the picture, in red, is the Lord James Stuart, afterwards Regent Murray; beyond is the Earl of Glencairne; and in front, resting on his sword, is the Earl of Morton; behind whom is the Earl of Argyll, whose countess, the half-sister of Queen Mary, and the lady in attendance upon her, make up the chief light of the picture.

"Above this group is John Hamilton, Archbishop of St. Andrews,

supported by Bishop Beatoun, of Glasgow, with Quinton Kennedy, the Abbot of Cross Raguel, who maintained against Knox a public disputation.

"In the gallery is Sir Patrick Learmonth, Provost of S. Andrews and Laird of Dairsie, and with him two of the baillies. The boy on their left is Andrew Melville, successor of Knox; and beyond him, with other Professors of the University of St. Andrews, is the learned Buchanan; at the back of the gallery is a crucifix, attracting the regard of Catholic penitents; and in the obscurity above is an escutcheon to the memory of Cardinal Beaton."

Cunningham adds to the description of the Romish hierarchy—

"Kennedy is whispering to Hamilton, while a Jackman, a retainer of the cathedral, stands ready with his harquebuss, waiting the signal of the archbishop to fire upon the preacher. The Admirable Crichton, however has his eye upon the Jackman, and his hand on his sword, though his mind seems with Knox. . . . It is a moment of intense anxiety: the sunshine, which finds its way through the deep and sculptured windows of the cathedral shows the calm but anxious countenances of the opposing parties, and the spectator feels that they are waiting but for the conclusion of the harangue to burst into action."

"In this picture," says Dr. Waagen, "which for size and richness of composition is one of Wilkie's greatest works, I fancied that I actually saw before me those fanatical puritans whom Walter Scott so admirably describes, and was again convinced of the congeniality between him and Wilkie. It is not only the vials of divine wrath which the preacher is pouring forth in full measure—the enthusiasm of the scholars—the resigned devotion of the women—and the suppressed rage of the Catholic clergy, especially of an opponent who lays his hand on his sword, that attract us to this picture, but also the accuracy with which the whole transaction, even to the details of the costume of that remote period, is placed before our eyes. The keeping too is admirable, and the effect, by the contrast of great masses of light and shade, striking. The engraving from this picture by Doo is very successful. It seems to me that no painter has hitherto had the good fortune to see his works engraved with so much delicacy and fidelity as Wilkie, for even Marcantonio does not so nearly approach Raphael, nor Vostermann and Bolswaert, Rubens."

In November, 1832, says Cunningham, "I attended a meeting at the Thatched House Tavern respecting a monument to the memory of Sir Walter Scott. Wilkie was

there, and was much affected. Nine years afterwards I was present at a meeting in the same place to vote a statue to Wilkie himself!" The few remaining years that we have to consider before the summons, which had already thinned the ranks of Wilkie's early friends and patrons, came to himself, passed prosperously and uneventfully away, and their interest is centred in the pictures that he produced. From 1832 to 1834 he was principally engaged upon portraiture, and for the accommodation of his sitters he rented a handsome and spacious mansion in Kensington—the Vicarage House, which, as Raimbach says, was a fitting home for the "foremost man of all the world" in his department of art, a proper place of reception for his numerous distinguished visitors, and situated in a locality to which he had acquired, during a residence of twenty-five years, an habitual attachment.

His pictures in the Exhibition of 1833 were three—*Spanish Monks, a Scene witnessed in a Capuchin Convent at Toledo*; a *Portrait of His Majesty King William IV. in the uniform of the Royal Grenadier Guards*; and the *Portrait of H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex, Earl of Inverness, in the costume of a Highland Chieftain*, described as the first of all modern portraits for truth of character and harmonious brightness of colour. No picture in the Exhibition could stand against it; it seemed to lighten all around.

In 1834 he exhibited six pictures. These were—

1. The *Portrait of the Duke of Wellington, in the uniform of Constable of the Tower, with his charger, painted for the Merchant Taylors' Company, to be placed in their Hall in the City of London*. This portrait was painted at Strathfieldsaye, where the horse, as well as his rider, were accessible to the painter.

2. *Not at Home*. A humorous picture of a debtor refusing entrance to a dun.

3. *Portrait of the Queen, in the dress worn by Her Majesty at her Coronation.*
4. *The Spanish Mother.*
5. *Portrait of the late Sir John Leslie, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh.*
6. *Portrait of a Lady.*

Of this group it was the *Spanish Mother* which pleased Wilkie, as well as the critics, the most. "The king," he says in a letter to Sir W. Knighton, "called me to him when he came before it, and spoke quite loud out as approving the expression of the child. When the company came afterwards I found all, particularly ladies, approving of this picture," &c. The *Portrait of the Queen* had a tone of gentleness and refinement, in harmony with the character of its subject.

Wilkie spent the summer of this year, as usual, in a round of visits, and on his return set to work with extraordinary energy. His pictures in the Exhibition of 1835 were very important, and are described in the catalogue as follows:—

64. *Christopher Columbus explaining the project of his intended voyage for the discovery of the New World, in the Convent of La Rabida.*

"This picture," says Dr. Waagen, "in which the figures are of an unusually large scale, is the chief specimen of the influence of Velasquez and Murillo on this great painter. In truth, with the masses of deep chiaroscuro, the warm, full tones, and the broad treatment, it gives the impression of an old picture. The heads, however, are wanting in that truth and character which belong to his early works."

88. *The First Ear-ring.* A beautiful figure of a child, divided between vanity and the fear of pain, standing by the knees of her mother to have the lobe of her ears pierced.

113. *Portrait of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington, in the dress worn by his Grace in active service.*

127. *Sancho Panza in the days of his youth.*—"Agua limpia a la Oveja, y Vino rubio para el Rey, rispondio Sancho."—*Don Quixote.*

137. *Portrait of Sir James McGrigor, Bart., Director-General of the Army Medical Department.* Painted for the Society of the Medical Officers of the Army.

299. *Portrait of the late Rev. Edward Irving.* Irving died on the 8th December, 1834. The portrait was for Sir W. Knighton.

In August of this year Wilkie for the first time turned his attention to Irish subjects, and visited Dublin, where he made a collection of sketches in pencil, of two of which the artist formed pictures, called the *Still at Work* and the *Peep o' day Boy*.

Wilkie wrote home to Sir W. Knighton a most interesting description of his tour, from the arrival in Dublin, where, he said, "Velasquez, Murillo, and Salvator Rosa would have found fit objects for their study," to Killarney, where he was delighted by the piper, who played Irish and Scottish song and pibroch, and especially the old song—

"On the lakes of Killarney I first saw the lad  
That with song and with bagpipe could make my heart glad."

To William Collins he wrote from Edgworthstown, prophetically, of the interest that Irish scenery must excite in time, and of the Spanish character of the people, which he particularly remarked in Mayo and Galway.

"The prevailing red of the women's dress, a petticoat and jacket dyed with madder, lights up the landscape and the cabin; the picturesque confusion of the household is also marked out as an object for art, and the unreserved domicile of the human species, with the brute creation basking round the door with the children, who are in a state of primitive innocence, sans chemise, sans culotte, sans everything, classes them higher far than subjects of common life."

Wilkie's pictures in the catalogue of the 1836 Exhibition are—

60. *The Peep o'day Boy's Cabin, in the West of Ireland.*

116. *Portrait of the Duke of Wellington, representing his*

Grace writing to the King of France on the night before the Battle of Waterloo.

123. *The First Ear-ring*.—“Il faut souffrir pour être belle.”

124. *The Emperor Napoleon with Pope Pius the Seventh at Fontainebleau* in the month of January, 1813.—See Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon*.

320. *Portrait of the Right Hon. Lord Montagu.*

423. *Portrait of J. Esdaile, Esq.*

The appearance of *The First Ear-ring* in the catalogues of two successive years is unexplained.

“The picture of *Napoleon and Pius VII.* was seen by Waagen on the painter's easel in 1835. He describes it as by far the most important of the few historical pictures that Wilkie painted. He saw it again in the collection of W. Marshall, Esq., of 85, Eaton Square, and says, ‘I was glad to find that the colours had not changed, which is a result seldom found in a modern picture.’”

“Leslie described this ‘as a noble, historical picture. The two unyielding men are admirably contrasted, and the disappointment of the Emperor at finding an obstacle to his wishes, in the mind of the Pope (which seldom was an obstacle in his own mind to anything he wished), namely conscience—as well as the determination of his character, is expressed not only in his face, but in his figure from head to foot.’”

The *Peep o'day Boy* is well described in the *Athenæum* of 7th May, 1836:—“The rebel, a fine athletic young fellow—rude, not brutal—has thrown himself down upon the mud floor and fallen into a deep slumber, with the hand of his naked infant clasped in his own. By his side kneels his wife, and listens with a countenance of intense anxiety to another female, who whispers in her ear—most probably the news of the approach of a party of military. The expression of these figures is admirable, though saddening: the picture has a moral as well as a meaning.”

This picture was hung in the close neighbourhood of a peaceful scene of village happiness, called *Sunday Morning*, by Collins, and a contemporary critic called attention to the

contrast they formed :—"Let the lovers of agitation 'look on this picture and on this.' . . . Such as Mr. Wilkie has depicted, is the Irish cabin ; such as Mr. Collins, with as true a pencil, has depicted, is the English cottage. Such, also, are the inhabitants of the one ; and such, also, are the inhabitants of the other. Agitation, treason, murder, crowd the one ; quiet, peace, content—yea, even in poverty—encompass the other," &c.

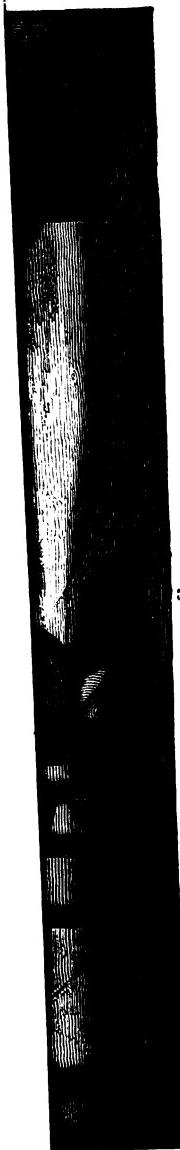
It was in June, 1836, and during the Whig administration, says Raimbach, that Wilkie received the distinction of knighthood from the hands of William IV. :—

" It was more especially the affair of Lord John Russell, and it has been a matter of some wonder that the Tories should have thus suffered their political opponents to gather this honour for their party of performing an act of obvious justice ; particularly as Sir Robert Peel was the artist's personal friend, as well as one of his greatest admirers, and a most liberal purchaser of his pictures. The ceremony took place at a levée in the ordinary way, and was attended, also in the ordinary way, by some good-humoured jests of his Majesty on the Christian name of David (for the 'gentle monarch ever loved a joke'), and as to the certainty of its not being Saul ! On retiring back to the crowded circle Wilkie felt the eager pressure of a friendly hand on his, and, turning his head, found it proceeded from Lord John Russell, who warmly congratulated him on his newly-won dignity, so well merited and so judiciously conferred."

Among the interesting incidents recorded in Sir David's correspondence of this year, he mentions a visit to Admiral Hardy at Greenwich Hospital, where he found that "the only books the old sailors can be brought to read are the novels of Sir Walter Scott." Sir Thomas Hardy was the captain and intimate friend of Nelson, "of whom he delights to talk." At Chepstow he attended a meeting of Irvingites, with which he was much impressed ; and the more interested because, when Edward Irving first came to London, it was to himself that he was recommended by Dr. Chalmers. All these incidents are related in letters to Sir William Knighton ; but on the 14th October, Wilkie has to write to his sister :—

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THE RABBIT ON THE WALL, BY DAVID WILKIE.  
*Painted in 1816.*



DEATH OF SIR WILLIAM KNIGHTON AND OF WILLIAM IV. 93

"My dear and esteemed friend, Sir William Knighton, died on Tuesday last. . . . This is heavy news. For myself, I may truly say I have never before had such a friend."

About this time Wilkie began to occupy his moments of leisure in the preparation of his "Remarks upon Painting," which are published at length in Cunningham's *Biography*.

Wilkie had in all seven pictures in the Academy of 1837. This was the first Exhibition held in the new rooms at Trafalgar Square.

No. 67 was a *Portrait of the King*; No. 119, the *Escape of Mary Queen of Scots from Lochleven Castle*; No. 144, the *Empress Josephine and the Fortune-teller*. The quotations to this are:—

"When fortune placed a crown on Josephine's head she told me that the event, extraordinary as it was, had been predicted. It is certain she put faith in fortune-tellers."—*Burien*.

"The event this picture is intended to represent took place in the island of Martinique in the West Indies, of which Josephine was a native; when a negress who offered to tell the fortunes of the party, on looking at her hand, expressed unwonted surprise at the destiny it indicated, which she said was that Josephine should have a crown put on her head, and be greater than a queen. This prediction, naturally treasured by herself, is known to have been currently reported and believed in France long before its remarkable accomplishment took place in her coronation as Empress."

180. *The Portrait of the Earl of Tankerville*.

358. *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (with the quotation from the poem of Burns).

437. *Portrait of a Gentleman Reading*. (The gentleman reading is the artist's brother, Thomas.)

719. *Portrait of the late Sir William Knighton*.

On the death of William IV., in June, 1837, the Queen renewed to Sir David his appointment of "Painter in Ordinary," and in October began to sit with great regularity for her portrait in the picture of the *Queen's First Council*.

"Having been accustomed to see the Queen from a child," Wilkie wrote to Collins, "my reception had a little the air of that of an early acquaintance. She is eminently beautiful, her features nicely formed, her skin smooth, her hair worn close to her face, in a most simple way, glossy and clean-looking. Her manner, though trained to act the sovereign, is yet simple and natural. She has all the decision, thought, and self-possession of a queen of older years ; has all the buoyancy of youth, and from the smile to the unrestrained laugh is a perfect child." This is extracted from a letter of October, 1837.

Wilkie worked with great energy, but under great difficulties towards the completion of this picture, and was able to send it to the Exhibition of the following May. It is described in the official catalogue as follows :—

60. *Our Sovereign the Queen Victoria, presiding at the Council upon Her Majesty's Accession to the Throne, on the 20th of June, 1837.*

"The Queen is represented seated at the head of the council-table, and holds in her hand the most gracious declaration then addressed by Her Majesty to the Lords and other of the council then assembled, of whom the following portraits, in the order in which they are placed on the canvas, are introduced.

"Behind Her Majesty's chair are the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Albemarle, the Right Hon. George Byng, and C. C. Greville, Esq. In front of the royal chair and beginning, at the left hand of the Queen, are the Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord President of the Council, the Marquess of Anglesea, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Howick, Lord John Russell, the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, the Right Hon. the Speaker of the House of Commons, Earl Grey, the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Denman, the Right Hon. Thomas Erskine, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Morpeth, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Lyndhurst, His Majesty the King of Hanover, the Duke of Wellington, the Earl of Jersey, the Right Hon. J. W. Croker, the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart., His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, Lord Holland, the Attorney-General, the Marquess of Salisbury, Lord Burghersh, and the Lord Mayor of the City of London."

No. 200. *Portrait of Daniel O'Connell, M.P.*

No. 201. *The Bride at her Toilet on the Day of her Wedding*  
(and three portraits).

"The pictures are all in the Academy," he wrote to Collins. "I have sent the *Queen's First Council*: it contains about thirty portraits, which form the interest of the picture. The *Bride Dressing at her Toilet*, and a full-length portrait of that most staunch supporter of her Majesty's ministers, *Mr. Daniel O'Connell*. This last was offered to me to paint, and it was difficult to refuse, for he had sat to no other artist. My Whig friends are much pleased with it—some say it is the best portrait I have painted. Mr. O'Connell himself is pleased."

The Catalogue of the Exhibition for 1839 contained the record of five pictures from Sir David Wilkie :—

No. 65. *Sir David Baird discovering the body of the Sultan Tippoo Saib, after having captured Seringapatam, on the 4th of May, 1799.*

"General Baird, who is standing in the gateway under which Tippoo received his death-wound, is supposed to be giving orders that the body should be carried to the palace; and below his feet in the parapet wall is a grating here introduced as giving light to the dungeon in which he had been for nearly four years immured by Hyder Ali and his son, the same Tippoo Sultan, who, by a remarkable dispensation of Providence, he now finds prostrate at his feet, bereft of his crown, his kingdom, and his life."

#### 154. *Grace before Meat.*

"A lowly cot whose simple board is spread,  
The simple owner seated at its head ;  
His bonnet lifts and doth to Heaven appeal,  
To grant a blessing on the humble meal.  
The faithful partner of his toil and care  
Mingles with his her low but fervent prayer ;  
And e'en the baby taught by pious love,  
Raises his little arms to *Him* above.  
While round the growing progeny are seen  
With health's own roses, and with artless mien ;  
Blessings that to the rich are oft denied,  
But which are of the poor the joy and pride."

MS., The *Countess of Blessington*.

242. *Portrait of Matthew Prime Lucas, Esq., Alderman; President of St. Bartholomew's Hospital.* (Painted by order of the Governors.)

263. *The Grandfather.* (Being portraits of Joseph Wilson, Esq., and his grandson, Joseph Loyd Brereton.)

"So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

503. *Portrait of Master Robert James Donne.*

In 1840, there were no less than eight of Wilkie's pictures in the Exhibition :—

48. *Benvenuto Cellini, presenting, for the approval of Pope Paul III., a silver censer of his own workmanship.*

62. *Portrait of the Queen Victoria, in the robes of state in which Her Majesty meets the Parliament.*

110. *Portrait of Viscount Arbuthnot, Lord Lieutenant of Kincardineshire.* (Painted, by order, for the county, to be placed in the County Hall in Stonehaven.)

112. *A Sketch for a picture from the Gentle Shepherd of Allan Ramsay.*

" My Peggy sings so saftly,  
When on my pipe I play,  
By a' the rest, it is confess,  
By a' the rest, that she sings best,  
My Peggy sings so saftly ;  
And in her sangs are tauld  
Wi' innocence, the wale o' sense,—  
At wawking o' the fauld."

132. *Portrait of Mrs. Hamilton Nisbett Ferguson, of Raith.*

252. *The Irish Whisky-still.* 276. *The Hookabadar.* 584. *The Disabled Commodore, in his Retirement at Greenwich, 1800.*

Sir David Wilkie's pictures in the Exhibition of 1841 :—

67. *The Student.*

116. *Portrait of Sir Peter Laurie.*



## CHAPTER VII.

### WILKIE'S LAST JOURNEY AND DEATH.

ON the 15th of August, 1841, Wilkie set out upon his final journey in the company of his friend, Mr. W. Woodburn, by the steamer *Batavier*, to Rotterdam. His journal at once assumes the lively and vigorous tone of other days, and describes how every hour was utilised in visiting the picture galleries and private collections of the cities they stopped at. At the Hague, the collection of M. Verstolk van Soelen offered specimens of Hobbima, Cuyp, Ruysdael, and Vandervelde, and Rembrandt's *School of Anatomy*; but what pleased him above all, he writes, was an *old woman's head* by Rembrandt. At Amsterdam his first visit was to Rembrandt's house, in the Jews' quarter, which struck him as "a most unsuitable residence for this great master," and, "like the shell which incloses the caterpillar, was only a temporary abode for the winged genius to whom art owes so much of its brilliancy." Here also he saw the *Night Watch* or *Banning Cock Company*, "which," he thought, "if it had been a fine subject, like the *Christ before Pontius Pilate*, which Rembrandt has etched, would be one of the finest pictures he ever produced." He was greatly struck also with the "gusto and freedom" of the *Syndics*. In the same evening "saw two

whole lengths of Rembrandt—most superb ;—and was taken to the house of the family of Six,” where he saw the portrait of the *Burgomaster* “painted with great power and effect, but which I think was unfinished. Saw also, at the same house, pictures by Ostade, Metsu, Ruysdael, and Maes, in black frames, that had hung in these frames, and on the same walls, ever since they were painted.”

The town of Nymegen, and all the circumstances of trees, houses, and cattle, of the surrounding country, reminded him of Cuyp, and thus, finding something lively and new to record of all the objects around them, even in the journey up the Rhine by steamer to Cologne—the dreariest scene of flat monotony to the ordinary traveller—he finds its own peculiar beauty, if not on the earth, in the sky. From Cologne, the friends proceeded up the Rhine to Mayence, and thence by rail to Frankfort, where they saw a piece on the stage called *Correggio*, in which that great master, being in obscurity and poverty, was visited and relieved by G. Romano and Michelangelo. “We all agreed,” he wrote, “that there was no sort of play could so engross and interest us under all circumstances.”

At Munich Wilkie met his old friend Herr von Dillis : “Our meeting most joyous and hearty ; eighty-one years of age and in good health !” From Munich they drove to Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart, romantic among the mountains, and reminding Sir David of Edinburgh ; then from Linz to Vienna, by the Danube, “an interesting day’s voyage, the steamer darting like an arrow past the hills, and dales, and towers, of this romantic river.” From Vienna, by the Danube steamer to Pesth, and thence in a great crowd of Hungarian passengers romantically clothed, to Tracova, where they left the steamer, and embarked in small boats to proceed to another that was waiting to continue the journey to Constantinople.

Arriving at the Turkish capital in October, Wilkie says that he exclaimed, like Dandie Dinmont when he saw Pleydel in the chair at High Jinks, "De'il the like o' this I ever saw!" The costumes of the inhabitants, to him, were "splendid even when in dirt and rags," and the place "exceeded in wonder all he had ever yet seen; but it was the wonder of disappointment that the domicile of the Turk should be so inferior to the splendour of his attire!" The first subject for a picture that he found was "a scribe of most venerable appearance, writing for two Turkish women, one very handsome," of whom he made the study, never finished, called *The Writer*, which "as a piece of colour," says Cunningham, "is as rich as Rembrandt or Correggio."

It was not until the middle of December that the Sultan was able to give sittings for his portrait, and the friends led a life of incessant activity in the meantime, in the European society of the place. Among other remarkable incidents they met there Sir Moses Montefiore upon his mission of intercession on behalf of the Jews in Syria, and he received the artists very hospitably, and became their introducer to a great deal of picturesque society among Jewish and Armenian families, all of which is very graphically described in Wilkie's letters and journals. The admiral and officers of the fleet were also hospitably disposed, and the news of the taking of St. Jean d'Acre by the Allies was celebrated in grand festivities. Upon this subject Wilkie seized for his picture of *A Tartar Narrating the Victory in a Turkish Café*, which was subsequently engraved among the Oriental sketches. The studies for the Sultan's portrait were finished towards Christmas. Wilkie wrote, "The Sultan has good eyes and mouth, about eighteen years old, and marked with the small pox." All who saw the portrait, he says "think it very like, and very agreeably so." Sailing on the 12th of January, and looking back at parting upon "a most splendid view of Constantinople,

with all her mosques, minarets, palaces, and towers, illuminated by the setting sun," they lingered at Smyrna and at Rhodes, where they admired the relics of chivalry, "the triple walls and fosses, the clean, well-paved streets, and the strong stone-built houses with Knights' coats of arms in the walls;" finally, on the 8th of February, in company with a crowd of Jewish pilgrims, they came in sight of the Holy Land,

"Extended right and left, far and wide, with Mount Lebanon and its extended range right ahead, with the sun beginning to dart his rays, and mount his glorious orb over the southern summit of the hallowed mountain. On deck all was stir and preparation; the various aged persons of the chosen people were decorating themselves with the sacerdotal robes of the sacred office, and though tranquil, were yet apparently deeply moved. Some with the Bible in hand, with a black strap twisted round their naked left arm, and with a small ark or tabernacle tied round their brow, were with an oscillating movement of the head repeating some appropriate prayers or thanksgiving upon the near accomplishment of their voyage."

Wilkie himself, whatever were the motives of his pilgrimage, approached the holy places with deeper feelings than an artist's curiosity.

The whole of his life had been tempered with the religious habits of thought and observance that he acquired at his home, and his familiar friends were chosen among those who went with him in this respect, although his journal has in it none of the ejaculatory prayers of Haydon, nor even the calmer expressions of religious thought that are found in that of W. Collins, yet he finds it only natural that Jerusalem should be approached with the excitement of awe. To him it is

"Unlike all other cities, recalling the imaginations of Nicolas Poussin, a city not for every day—not for the present—but for all time; as if built for an eternal Sabbath; the buildings, the walls, the gates so strong and so solid, as if made to survive all other cities. And (though we saw it from the least imposing side) its stupendous walls, its elevated site, its domes and minarets, still rising in their greatness after all the city has suffered," etc.

We are drawing very near the end of Wilkie's correspondence. There is something strikingly dramatic in the manner of his disappearance from the world. After all that he had accomplished at home towards weding the art of his time with the close observance of nature, he appears in this last act of his life as a pioneer of those who have since studied in the Holy Land the interpretation of Scriptural and Oriental subjects. This is expressed in his own letter to Sir Robert Peel, in which he attempts to explain the motives that he had in his mind when he undertook this journey :—

"It is a fancy or belief that the art of our time and of our British people may reap some benefit that has induced me to undertake this journey. It is to see, to inquire, and to judge, not whether I can, but whether those who are younger, or with far higher attainments and powers, may not in future be required in the advance and spread of our knowledge, to refer at once to the localities of Scripture events, when the great work is to be essayed of representing Scripture history. Great as the assistance, I might say the inspiration, which the art of painting has derived from the illustration of Christianity, and great as the talent and genius have been this high walk of art has called into being, yet it is remarkable that none of the great painters to whom the world has hitherto looked for the visible appearance of Scripture scenes and feelings have ever visited the Holy Land."

In a previous letter to W. Collins, he had said on this subject that "the painter who has most truly given us an Eastern people is Rembrandt. The Scripture subjects of Rembrandt are recalled to us at every turn by what we see before us ; and this anticipating power of rendering what he never could have seen, raises the great painter of Amsterdam even higher than we had thought him."

Wilkie wrote a great many long letters from Jerusalem, all of which, published in Cunningham's *Biography*, are worth reading, and show the same lively faculty of observation and description that is remarkable in the whole of his correspondence from the beginning to the end. Amongst these, the

latest are addressed to W. Collins, the Earl of Leven, Professor Buckland, and Thomas Phillips, R.A. On the 7th of April the return journey was begun, under circumstances of some danger from the plague, which was raging all round the country at the time, to escape from which they embarked at Jaffa in the first vessel that they could obtain, which was a small bark bound for Damietta. From Damietta, after a long detention by stress of weather, they reached Alexandria, where Wilkie required medical attendance for a bowel complaint, which weakened him excessively. He recovered, however, under the care of Dr. Laidlaw, and here he painted the portrait of the great founder of the Egyptian dynasty, who objected to the study that was shown to him, that the deep lines and furrows which time and care had marked him with were not to be seen in the picture. Wilkie describes Mehemet Ali as an interesting character, "has a fine head and beard, and, I think, makes the best portrait I have met with in my travels."

Wilkie's next letter home is dated from Malta, on board the *Oriental* steamer, and has the interest of being the last that he lived to write. It is full of the description of a dinner which, at his suggestion, had been given to Mr. Waghorn at Alexandria, on the 20th, the day before the *Oriental* sailed. It was a "jolly party of a dozen." They had toasts and speeches, and everything that could create merriment. It concludes:—

"In the hope that we shall with the *Oriental* reach England in a day or two after this letter, I shall add nothing further, and only venture to hint that the house may be got into condition for my arrival. With best regards to Thomas and Margaret, and with assurance to Sir Peter and Lady Laurie, Mr. Collins and all o'er friends how glad I shall be to see them, I am, my dear sister,

"Most faithfully and truly yours.

"D. W."

The last entry in Wilkie's journal, made on the eve of his death, is a suggestion for the establishment of some institution for the diffusion of knowledge on Scriptural subjects.

He died suddenly, on the morning of Tuesday, the 1st of June, 1841, immediately after the steamer had sailed from Gibraltar. The vessel was put back, and a request sent ashore for permission to land the body; but this being refused, his body was committed to the deep on the evening of the day of his death.

To those who have assisted at such a funeral at sea, and felt the solemn influence of the silence that is produced by the temporary stoppage of the machinery, whilst the service is read, and witnessed the tender but manly reverence of sailors for the remains, beneath the national flag, when they entrust them to the sea which is their own familiar home, there would be no added regret for the accident that procured a friend his burial at sea. Turner's almost mystical picture on the subject, *The Burial of Sir David Wilkie*, in which a great flood of crimson light seems to consecrate the temporary chapel of the waist of the ship and the coffin's plunge into the illuminated wave, is an eloquent rendering of the solemnity of such a scene, which, to those who knew the value of the trained skill and active intellect that the world lost in Wilkie, must have been even more than usually impressive.

The appreciation of this loss was not peculiar to the world of art. Bulwer, when touching on the popular department of art, says:—

"Who does not feel the name of Wilkie rush to his most familiar thoughts? Who does not feel that the pathos and the humour of that most remarkable painter have left on him recollections as strong and enduring as the *chef-d'œuvre* of literature itself? and that every new picture of Wilkie—in Wilkie's own vein—constitutes an era in enjoyment?

More various, more extensive in his grasp than even Hogarth, his genius sweeps from the dignity of history to the verge of caricature itself.

"Humour is the prevalent trait of all minds capable of variety in character; from Shakespeare and Cervantes, to Goldsmith and Smollett. But of what shades and differences is not humour capable? Now it loses itself in terror, now it broadens into laughter. What distance from the Mephistopheles of Goethe to the Sir Roger de Coverley of Addison, or from Sir Roger de Coverley to Humphrey Clinker! What an illimitable space from the dark power of Hogarth to the graceful tenderness of Wilkie! And which can we say with certainty is the higher of the two? Can we place even the *Harlot's Progress* beyond the *Distrainting for Rent* or the exquisite beauty of *Duncan Gray*? Wilkie is the Goldsmith of painters, in the amiable and pathetic humour, in the combination of smiles and tears, of the familiar and the beautiful; but he has a stronger hold both over the more secret sympathies and the springs of a broader laughter than Goldsmith himself. If the drama could obtain a Wilkie we should hear no more of its decline. He is the exact illustration of the doctrine I have advanced above—of the power and dignity of the popular school in the hands of a master; dignified, for truth never loses a certain majesty, even in her most familiar shapes."

But Bulwer felt still more deeply the sympathetic power of Wilkie. In the same treatise from which the above is extracted he calls Edwin Landseer

"A sort of link to the genius of Wilkie, carrying down the sentiment of humane humour from man, to man's great dependent family, and binding all creation together in one common sentiment of that affection whose wisdom comprehends all things. Wilkie and Landseer are the great benevolists of painting; as in the quaint sublimity of the Lexicon of Suidas, Aristotle is termed 'the secretary of nature, who dipped his pen in intellect' so each of these artists may be called, in his several line, the secretary also of nature who dips his pencil in sympathy; for both have more in their genius of the heart's philosophy than the mind's." [*England and the English, published in 1833.*]

Leslie, speaking of him in his personal and social relations, says:—

"The recollections of all my intercourse with Wilkie, and I knew him for about twenty years, are altogether delightful. I had no

reason ever to alter the opinion I first formed of him, that he was a truly great artist and a truly good man. The little peculiarities of his character, as they all arose from the best intentions, rather endeared him to his friends than otherwise. He was a modest man, and had no wish to attract attention by eccentricity ; and indeed all his oddity, and he was in many things very odd, arose from an extreme desire to be exactly like other people. Naturally shy and reserved, he forced himself to talk. I can easily conceive, from what I knew of him, that he had a great repugnance to making speeches at dinners or public meetings ; yet knowing that from the station he had acquired he must do such things, he made public speaking a study. He carried the same desire of being correct into lesser things, not from vanity, but from a respect for society, for he considered that genius did not give a man a right to be negligent in his manners even in trifles. When quadrilles were introduced Wilkie set himself diligently to study them, and drew ground plans and elevations of the new dances to aid him in remembering the figures. He was always ceremonious, but as I have said, from modesty, and not from pride or affectation, for no man had less of either."

The excitement produced at home by the news of Sir David Wilkie's death, will be in the memory of many still living. He was a man who had ever many friends and no enemies ; his great success and his honours were borne so modestly that he excited no envy, and the simplicity of his method of indefatigable industry in study would have disarmed jealousy itself.

The Academy met and framed an address of condolence to Miss Wilkie, which was numerously signed, though Haydon refused, even in this, to be led by the "thirty-nine," who he wished had been thrown into the sea after poor Wilkie—to his eyes the only man of merit among them. Sincerely as Haydon mourned, in his own wild way for his friend, there is little in his egotistical ravings on the subject that is worth quoting, until he cries at last "Peace to his spirit ! May we meet hereafter, cleansed of our earthly frailties, never to separate more ! "

## THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF WILKIE IN PUBLIC GALLERIES IN ENGLAND.

### LONDON. NATIONAL GALLERY.

- The Blind Fiddler. *Painted in 1807 for Sir George Beaumont, Bart.*  
The Village Festival. *Painted in 1811 for Mr Angerstein.*  
Portrait of Thomas Daniell, R.A.  
The Parish Beadle. *Painted in 1822 for Lord Colborne.*  
The First Ear-ring. *Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1835.*  
The Bagpiper. *Painted for Mr. Francis Freeling in 1813.*  
A Woody Landscape. *Painted in 1822.*  
Newsmongers. *Painted for General Phipps. Exhibited in 1821.*  
Peep-o' Day Boy's Cabin West of Ireland. *Exhibited in 1836.*  
The Preaching of John Knox before the Lords of the Congregation,  
10th June, 1559. *Commenced for the Earl of Liverpool, and completed for the late Sir Robert Peel. Exhibited in 1832.*  
Sketch of Blind Man's Buff. *Signed D. WILKIE, 1811.*

### SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

- The Broken Jar. *Exhibited in 1816.*  
The Refusal (Duncan Gray). *Exhibited in 1814.*  
Studies for The Peep-o'-Day Boy, *in chalk and sepia.*  
Studies for The Refusal. *Pencil, chalk, and ink.*

### NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.

- Portrait of Himself (*miniature*).

### EDINBURGH. NATIONAL GALLERY.

- John Knox Dispensing the Sacrament at Calder House. *Left unfinished.*  
Sketch of Kilmaulin Sacrament.  
Sketch of a Confessional.  
Pitlessie Fair. *The property of Mr. J. Boyd Kinnear of Kinloch.*  
Portrait of Mrs. Hunter (sister of Sir D. Wilkie).  
Pen and sepia drawing of Blind Man's Buff.

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"Reading the Will" is in the New Pinakothek at Munich.

## I N D E X.

*A List of Wilkie's principal works will be found indexed under "Pictures."*

- ABBOTSFORD, 53, 55, 56.  
Aberdeen, 13.  
Acre, St. Jean d', Siege of, 99.  
Adelaide, Queen, 89.  
Adriatic, The, 78.  
Alexandria, 102.  
Allan, David, 15.  
Allan, Sir W., 7.  
Alps, The, 70.  
Amsterdam, 97.  
Anatomy of Expression, 18.  
Anderson, John, 51.  
Angerstein Collection, The, 42.  
Angerstein, Mr., 23, 34, 43.  
Antwerp, 51.  
Apennines, The, 78.  
Artist, The, 27, 29.  
*Ascension of the Virgin* (Correggio), 72.  
*Assumption of the Virgin* (Titian), 76.  
Atheneum, 82, 91.  
Athol, Duke of, 53, 55.  
Audley, Lord, 35.
- BAILLIE, DR., 38, 46, 52.  
Baillie, Joanna, 38.  
Baird, General Sir David, 95.  
Ballantyne, Mr., 38.  
Bannatyne Club, 75.  
*Banning Cock Company* (Rembrandt), 97.  
Baring, Sir Francis, 28.  
Barney (of the *Times*), 66.  
Barry, R.A., James, 20, 21.  
Beaumont, Sir George, 21, 22, 23, 24,  
26, 28, 30, 31, 34, 38, 39, 40, 51, 52,  
66, 67, 79, 81.  
Beaumont, Lady, 79.  
Bechey, Sir William, 36, 37, 40.  
Bell, Sir Charles, 17, 18.  
Belvedere Gallery (Vienna), 77.
- Benet, Dr., 70.  
Beruard, Thomas, 28.  
Bird, Edward, 41.  
Blair Athol, 54, 55.  
Blessington, Countess of, 95.  
Bologna, 76.  
Book of Death, 80.  
Bonaparte, 47, 49, 70, 91.  
Borrowstone, 53.  
Bourgeois, R.A., Sir Francis, 23 31,  
34, 40, 41.  
Bredel, Mr., 32.  
Brighton, 50.  
British Institution, 50.  
British Gallery, 60.  
Brougham, Lord, 66.  
Buccleuch, Duke of, 55, 56.  
Buckland, Professor, 101.  
Bulwer, 56, 103.  
*Burgomaster Six* (Rembrandt), 97.  
*Burial of Wilkie* (Turner), 103.  
Burnet, John, 6, 8, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29,  
61, 68, 72, 73.  
Bute (Scotland), 53.
- CALAIS, 51.  
Cailcott, R.A., 27, 82.  
Campo Santo, 70.  
Cano, Alonso, 80.  
Canova, 51, 73.  
Carlisle, Anthony, 37.  
Carlsbad, 77.  
Carracci, The, 76.  
Carse, 9.  
Chalmers, Dr., 65, 92.  
Chantrey, 28.  
Chapman, Mr. John, 30.  
Cheltenham, 69.  
Chepstow, 92.  
*Christ before Pilate* (Rembrandt), 97.  
Cimabue, 74.

- Claude Lorrain, 40, 74, 82.  
 Cobham Hall, 34, 35.  
 Codrington, Sir Edward, 66.  
 Colborne, Lord, 66.  
 Coleorton, 39, 40.  
 Collins, William, 61, 62, 63, 68, 79, 81,  
     82, 91, 94, 95, 100, 101.  
 Cologne, 98.  
 Compton, Lady, 75.  
 Constantinople, 98, 99.  
 Copley, R.A., John Singleton, 28, 40.  
 Correggio, 8, 72, 73, 75, 76, 84, 85, 98,  
     99.  
 Cosway, R.A., Richard, 40.  
 Crabbe, The poet, 64.  
 Crawford, Lord, 20.  
 Cromek, R. H., engraver, 41.  
 Culz, 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13, 28, 39, 55.  
 Cumberland, Duke of, 63.  
 Cumberland, Richard, 29.  
 Cupar, 13, 55.  
 Curtis, Sir Roger, 39.  
 Cuy, 52, 97, 98.
- DAMIETTA, 102.  
 Dance, R.A., 40.  
 Danube, The, 98.  
 Darling, Dr., 66, 69.  
 Darnley, Lord, 34, 35.  
 Davison, Alexander, 28.  
 Death, Book of, 60.  
*Dentatus* (Haydon's), 31, 38.  
 Devis, 28.  
 Dillies, Herr von, 77, 78, 98.  
 Diploma Picture, 44.  
 Dobree, Samuel, 34, 49, 60.  
 Doo (engraver), 87.  
 Douglas, Rev. Mr., 50.  
 Dresden, 77.  
 Drury Lane Theatre burnt, 38.  
 Dublin, 90.  
 Dubost, Mr. (French artist), 24.  
 Dürer, Albrecht, 78.
- EASTLAKE, R.A., Sir Charles, 73.  
 Edgworthstown (Ireland), 90.  
 Edinburgh, 53.  
 Ellis, Wynn, 12.  
*Epigoniad*, Author of the, 2.  
 Essex, Earl of, 67.  
 Ettrick Shepherd, The, 55.  
 Etty, R.A., William, 16, 82.
- FARINGTON, R.A., 40.  
 Ferguson, Sir Adam, 56, 57, 63.
- Flaxman, R.A., John, 15, 40  
 Frankfort, 98.  
 Florence, 78.  
 Freelng, Sir Francis, 46.  
 Freeman, 18.  
 Fuseli, R.A., Henry, 15, 16, 17, 31,  
     40.
- GAINSBOROUGH, 27.  
 Galway, 90.  
 Gandy, R.A., William, 40.  
 Geddes, Andrew, 63, 75.  
 Geneva, 79.  
 Genoa, 70.  
*Gentle Shepherd, The*, 10, 67, 68, 96  
*Gentleman's Magazine*, 24, 81.  
 George IV., 46, 62, 64, 79, 80, 84, 85.  
 Gérard, 49.  
 Gibraltar, 103.  
 Gillespie, Dr., 3, 78.  
 Giotto, 70, 75.  
 Gloucester, Duke of, 31, 32.  
 Gordon, Sir Willoughby, 54, 60.  
 Graham, General, 54.  
 Graham, John, 6, 8, 15.  
 Greenwich Hospital, 92.  
 Grosvenor, Lord, 82.
- HAGUE, The, 97.  
 Hamilton, Duke of, 78.  
 H. milton, Horatia, 37.  
 Hamilton, Lady, 37.  
 Hamilton, Lord, 51.  
 Hardy, Admiral Sir Thomas, 92.  
 Haydon in prison, 65.  
*Haydon's Journal*, 13, 16, 17, 21, 23,  
     25, 31, 33, 35, 38, 39, 40, 42, 46, 49,  
     50, 51, 82, 83, 100, 105.  
 Hazlitt, Thomas, 42.  
 Heaton, Mrs. C., 27.  
 Herculaneum, 75.  
 Hilton, R.A., 82.  
 Hoare, Prince, 50.  
 Hobbema, 97.  
 Hogarth, William, 27, 104.  
 Hogg, James, 55.  
 Holbein, 78.  
 Holford, Mr., 62.  
 Holland, 52, 97.  
*Holyrood House*, 53. (*See Entry of*  
     *George IV.*)  
 Hoppner, R.A., 14, 27, 40.  
 Howard, R.A., 40.  
 Humorous Catalogue, 67.  
 Hurst and Robinson, 75.

- IBBERTSON, JULIUS, 21.  
 Innspruck, 76.  
 Inverary, 54.  
 Ireland, 90, 91.  
 Irving, Edward, 65, 90, 92.  
 Irving, Washington, 36, 55, 56, 81.  
 JACKSON, THOMAS, 16, 21, 22, 23, 26,  
     36, 40, 82.  
 Jaffa, 102.  
 Jerusalem, 100, 101.  
 Josephine, Empress, 93.  
 Juanne, Juan Battista, 80.  
 KETTLE SCHOOL, 4.  
 Killarney (Ireland) 90.  
 Killiecrankie Pass, 54.  
 Kinghorn, 13.  
 Kinneill House, 53.  
 Knighton, Sir William, 89, 90, 92,  
     93.  
 Knowles, J., 17.  
 LAIDLAW, DR., 102.  
 Laidlaw, W., 55, 57.  
 Landseer, R.A., Sir Edwin, 18, 104.  
 Lansdowne, Marquis of, 33, 34, 62.  
*Last Judgment, The* (Michelangelo)  
     72.  
 Laurie, Sir Peter, 102.  
 Lawrence, R.A., Sir Thomas, 14, 40,  
     65, 80, 82, 84.  
 Leicester, Sir John, 27.  
 Leslie, R.A., Charles Robert, 16, 42,  
     91, 104.  
 Leven, Earl of, 5, 101.  
 Lilburn, Ghost of Lady, 53.  
 Lindsay, Sir David, 13.  
 Linlithgow, 53.  
 Linz, 98.  
 Lister, David, 70.  
 Lister, Isabella (*Wilkie's Mother*), 1,  
     2, 45, 69.  
 Lister, James, 2.  
 Liston (actor), 42.  
 Lockhart, 57, 62, 63.  
 Lomond, Loch, 54.  
 London, First arrival in, 14.  
 Loutherbourg, De, 27.  
 Louvre, 47, 50.  
 MACDONALD, THOMAS, 14, 43.  
 MacGrigor, Sir James, 69.  
 Macneill of Oakfield, 54.  
 Macneill (poet) 38.  
 Madrid, 80.  
 Maes, 97.  
 Malta, 102.  
 Mansfield, Earl of, 19, 22, 23, 29.  
 Maratti, Carlo, 62.  
 Marshall, Mr., 82, 91.  
 Martin, Rev. Dr (of Monimail), 12.  
 Mathews (actor), 34.  
 Mayence, 98.  
 Mayo (Ireland), 90.  
 Mehemet Ali, 102.  
 Melrose, 55.  
 Melville, Earl of, 86.  
 Melville, Hon. W. Leslie, 5  
 Mengs, Raphael, 76.  
 Metsu, 29.  
 Metternich, 77.  
 Michelangelo, 8, 71, 72, 74, 98.  
 Milan, 70.  
 Miranda, General, 38.  
 Mitford, Miss, 66.  
 Montague, Earl of, 86.  
 Montefiore, Sir Moses, 99.  
 Moore, Sir John, Death of, 37.  
 Moore, Thomas, 73.  
 Morales, 80.  
 Morland, G., 15, 21.  
 Mother, Death of Wilkie's, 69.  
 Mulgrave, Lord, 21, 22, 26, 28, 29,  
     30, 31, 34, 39, 40, 66, 82.  
 Mulready, R.A., William, 16, 82.  
 Munich, 78, 98.  
 Murillo, 35, 80, 90.  
 Murray, John (publisher) 38  
 Mushet, Mr., 69.  
 Muskett, Mrs., 35.  
 NAPLES, 74.  
 National Gallery, 27, 34, 43, 66.  
 Nelson, Lord, 19, 37, 92.  
 Netherlands, 51.  
 Nollekens, R.A., 15, 40.  
 Northbrook, Lord, 28.  
 Northcote, R.A., James, 17, 27, 28,  
     36, 40.  
 Nymegen (Holland), 97.  
 OCHILTREE, EDIE, 53, 56.  
 O'Connell, Daniel, 95.  
 Opie, R.A., John, 14, 27.  
 "Opifer" (critic), 59.  
 Oriental Sketches, 99.  
 Ostade, 9, 26, 34, 48, 52, 61, 97.  
 Ostend, 51.  
 Owen, R.A., William, 27.

- PESTUM, 75.  
 Palafox, General, 81.  
 Palestine, 100, 101.  
 Paris, 47, 70.  
 Peel, Sir Robert, 66, 67, 74, 79, 92, 101.  
 Pesth, 98.  
*Peter Martyr* (Titian), 76.  
 Phillips, R.A., Thomas, 40, 82, 101.
- PICTURES BY WILKIE:**—  
*Alehouse Door.* *See Village Festival.*  
*Alfred in the Neatherd's Cottage,* 28, 44.  
*" Bagpipe, The,* 46. Sketch for, 44.  
*Baird, General, Discovering the Body of Tippoo Saib,* 95.  
*Benvenuto Cellini,* 82, 96.  
*Blind Fiddler,* 12, 22, 28, 27, 43. Sketch for, 44.  
*Blindman's Buff,* 42, 43, 46.  
*Bonnie Lady Gonie,* 3.  
*Boys Digging for Rats,* Sketch of, 44.  
*Bounty Money.* *See Village Recruit.*  
*Breakfast Party,* 46, 52.  
*Bride at her Toilet,* 95.  
*Buonaparte and the Pope,* 13. *See Pope and.*  
*Card Players,* The, 31, 32, 44. Sketch for, 44.  
*" China Menders,* The, 60.  
*Columbus,* 62, 89.  
*Commodore Trunnion,* 67.  
*Confessional,* The, 73.  
*Cottage Toilet,* The, 67, 83.  
*Cotter's Saturday Night,* 93.  
*Country Fair,* 11, 12, 44. *See Pitlessie Fair.*  
*Cut Finger,* The, 30, 36, 37, 43. Sketch for, 44.  
*Diana and Calista,* 8.  
*Diploma Picture,* R.A., 44.  
*Disabled Commodore,* The, 96.  
*Distrainting for Rent,* 45, 50, 62, 104.  
*Douglas and the Hermit,* 10, 104.  
*Duncan Gray,* 46, 52.  
*Entry of George IV. into Holyrood,* 63, 66, 83, 85.  
*Errand Boy,* The, 80.  
*Escape of Queen Mary from Lochleven Castle,* 53, 93.
- Gamekeeper,, A., 42, 43.  
*Gentle Shepherd, Sketch for,* 96.  
*Gipsy Woman and Child,* 44.  
*Grandfather, The,* 96.  
*Grace Before Meat,* 95.  
*Guerilla Council of War, The,* 80.  
*Guerilla Taking Leave of his Confessor,* 80.  
*Family Picture, A,* 44.  
*First Earring, The,* 89, 91.  
*Hermit, The,* 5.  
*Highland Family,* 67.  
*Holyrood.* *See Entry, etc.*  
*Hookabedlar, The,* 96.  
*Humorous Scene, A,* 42.  
*Jew's Harp,* 8, 12, 34, 35, 36, 43, 61.  
*" " Sketch of,* 44.  
*John Knox Preaching, etc.,* 62, 65, 66, 83, 86.  
*Josephine, Empress, and the Fortune-teller,* 93.  
*Knox.* *See John Knox.*  
*Letter of Introduction,* 46, 49.  
*Macbeth, Scene from,* 8.  
*Maid of Saragossa,* The, 80, 81.  
*Man with the Girl's Cap on,* 41, 44.  
*" " " Sketch of,* 44.  
*Monks at Confession,* 62.  
*New Coat, The,* 43.  
*Niobe Daughters,* 8.  
*Niobe's Head,* 7.  
*Not at Home,* 88.  
*Nymphs Gathering Grapes,* 66.  
*Parish Beadle, The,* 66.  
*Peep o'Day Boy's Cabin,* 62, 90, 91.  
*Pedlar, The,* 46.  
*Penny Wedding, The,* 46, 52, 60.  
*Pifferari Playing Hymns to the Madonna,* 76.  
*Pitlessie Fair,* 6, 11, 13 26, 44.  
*Pope and Bonaparte,* The, 62, 91.
- PORTRAITS:**—  
*Adelaide, Queen,* 89.  
*Arbuthnot, Viscount,* 96.  
*Buccleuch, Duchess of,* 37.  
*" Duke of,* 37.  
*Clergyman and his wife,* 44.  
*Donne, Robert James,* 96.  
*Edward Irving, Rev.* 90.  
*Esdale, J.,* 91.  
*Ferguson, Mrs. Hamilton,* 96.  
*Fitzgerald, Lady Mary,* 31

- Gentleman Reading, 93.  
 Himself, 4.  
 Kellie, Lord, 66.  
 Knighton, Sir William, 93.  
 Lady, A, 89.  
 Lady of Quality, 44.  
 Lansdowne, Marchioness of, 37.  
 Laurie, Sir Peter, 96.  
 Leslie, Sir John, 89.  
 Lucas, Matthew Prime, 96.  
 Macgrigor, Bart., Sir James, 90.  
 Montagu, Lord, 91.  
 Neave Family, 37, 41.  
 O'Connell, M.P., Daniel, 95.  
 Spanish Señorita, 80.  
 Sussex, Duke of, 88.  
 Tankerville, Earl of, 93.  
 Victoria, Queen, 96.  
 Wellington, Duke of, 88, 89, 90.  
 William IV., 88, 93.  
 York, Duke of, 66.
- Public House Door. *See* Village Festival.
- Queen's First Council, 93, 94, 95.  
 Reading of the Will, 76, 77, 78.  
 Refusal, The. *See* Duncan Gray.
- Rent Day, The, 22, 23, 29, 30, 52.  
 " " Sketch of, 44.  
 Roman Princess, &c., 79.  
 Sancho Panza, &c., 89.  
 School, The, 67.  
 Scott Family, The, 56, 57, 60.  
 Sheepwashing, 52.  
 Sick Lady, &c., 32, 34, 36, 37, 43.  
 sketch, 44.  
 Smugglers, &c., 67.  
 Spanish Monks, 88.  
 Spanish Mother, The, 89.  
 Spanish Posada, The, 80.  
 Spanish Señorita, 80.  
 Still at Work, The, 90.  
 Student, The, 96.  
 Sunday Morning, 30, 44.  
 Tartar in a Turkish Café, &c., 99.  
 Village Festival, The, 35, 40, 42.  
 Village Holiday, The, 43, 45.  
 Village Recruit, The, 12, 14.  
 Village Politicians, The, 21, 23, 24,  
 43.  
 " " Sketch of, 44.  
 "Wardrobe" Ransacked. *See* Man  
 with the Girl's Cap.  
 Whisky Still, The, 54, 60, 96.  
 Writer, The, 99.
- Pisa, 70.  
 Pitcairns, Dr., 35.  
 Pitlessie School, 3.  
 Pius VII., Pope, 91.  
 Plymouth, 39.  
 Pompeii, 75.  
 Portsmouth, 89.  
 Poussin, N., 74.  
 Prague, 77.  
 Prince Regent, The, 46, 60.  
 Prince of Wales, 41.  
 Private Exhibition, 43, 45.
- RAEBURN, 15.  
 Raimbach, 43, 51, 60, 67, 69, 84, 85,  
 88, 92.  
 Raphael, 8, 71, 75.  
 Ratho-Byres, 1.  
 Rejected Pictures, The, 58.  
 Rembrandt, 9, 36, 40, 48, 52, 74, 97,  
 99, 101.  
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 20, 27, 35, 39,  
 40, 72.  
 Rhine, The, 98.  
 Rhodes, 100.  
 Ribera, 80.  
 Rice, Mr., 62.  
 Richards, R.A., 40.  
 Rogers, Samuel, 34.  
 Romano, Giulio, 98.  
 Rome, 71, 72, 73, 78.  
 Rotterdam, 97.  
 Rouen, 47.  
 Royal Academy, 13, 14, 20, 40, 41,  
 42, 46, 84, 93.  
 Royal Academy, Exhibition of (1805)  
 14, (1806) 23, (1807) 26, 27, (1808)  
 32, (1809) 30, 38, (1810) 41, (1811)  
 42, (1813) 46, (1814) 46, (1815) 50,  
 58, (1818) 60, (1822) 61, (1823) 66,  
 (1824) 67, (1825) 67, (1830) 88,  
 (1832) 86, (1833) 88, (1834) 88,  
 (1835) 89, (1836) 90, (1837) 93,  
 (1838) 94, (1839) 95, (1840) 96,  
 (1841) 96.  
 Rubens, 35, 40, 51, 52, 71.  
 Runciman, 15.  
 Ruskin, John, 28.  
 Russell, Lord John, 92.  
 Ruysdael, 97.
- SAIN'T ANDREW's, 13.  
*Saint Jerome* (Correggio), 73.  
 Salerno, 75.  
 Salvator Rosa, 74, 90.

- Salzburg, 98.  
 Saunders (miniature painter), 18.  
 Saxony, 77.  
 Schleisheim, 98.  
*School of Anatomy* (Rembrandt), 97.  
 Scott, John (editor of the *Morning Chronicle*), 50.  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 36, 38, 53, 55, 56, 62, 64, 66, 75, 83, 84, 87, 92.  
 Seguier, 82.  
 Severn, R.A., 82.  
 Shee, R.A., Sir Martin, 27, 40, 84.  
 Sidney, Death of Sir Philip, 60.  
 Simplon, The, 70.  
 Sistine Chapel, 72.  
 Smirke, R.A., Sydney, 28, 40.  
 Smith, Rev. Sydney, 34, 36, 37.  
 Smyrna, 99.  
 Society of Arts, 20.  
 Soelen, M. Verstolk van, 97.  
 Spain, 80, 81.  
 Stafford, Marquis of, 46, 52.  
 Steen, Jan, 9, 52.  
 Stewart, Dugald, 53.  
 Stirling, 54.  
 Stodart, Mr. (pianoforte maker), 19, 69.  
 Stonehaven, County Hall, 96.  
 Stothard, R.A., Thomas, 40.  
 Strachan, Dr., 4.  
 Strathfieldsaye, 88.  
 Sultan, The, 99.  
*Sunday Morning* (Collins), 91, 92.  
 Swinbourne, Bart., Sir John, 60.  
*Syndics*, The (Rembrandt), 97.  
  
 TENIERS, 9, 15, 18, 22, 24, 26, 29, 30, 34, 35, 48, 51, 61.  
 Thompson, 27.  
 Thomson, Dr., 34, 35.  
 Thomson, Miss, 35.  
 Thomson, George, 5.  
 Thomson (Edinburgh), 8, 9.  
 Thomson, R.A., H., 40.  
 Thorwaldsen, 73.  
 Titian, 35, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76.  
 Toeplitz, 77.  
 Tracova, 98.  
 Trafalgar, Battle of, 19.  
 Tresham, B.A., 28, 40.  
 Trieste, 78.  
 Trustees' Academy, 5--10.  
  
 Turner, R.A., J. M. W., 15, 27, 40, 103.  
 Twiss, Mr., 37.  
 Tyrol, The, 76.  
  
 VANDERVELDE, 97.  
 Vanderwerf, 62.  
 Velasquez, 80, 90.  
 Venice, 76, 78.  
*Venus* (Titian), 74.  
 Vernon, Mr., 62.  
 Veronese, Paul, 35.  
 Vesuvius, 75.  
 Victoria, Queen, 93, 94.  
 Vienna, 77, 98.  
*Virgin and Child* (Correggio), 75.  
  
 WAAGEN, DR., 27, 30, 42, 66, 87, 89, 91.  
 Waghorn, Mr., 102.  
 Ward, R.A., 28.  
 Watteau, 8.  
 Wellington, Duke of, 61, 86, 88.  
 Wells, Mr., 34.  
 Wells, Colonel, 61.  
 West, R.A., Benjamin, 15, 28, 40.  
 Westall, R.A., 21, 28, 38, 40.  
 Whiteford, Caleb, 50.  
 Wilkie, Rev. David (Father of Sir D. W.), 1, 10, 19, 23, 25, 45.  
 Wilkie, James (Brother of Sir D. W.), 2.  
 Wilkie, James (of Gilchristown), 1.  
 Wilkie, John (Brother of Sir D. W.), 2, 32.  
 Wilkie, John (Grandfather of Sir D. W.), 1.  
 Wilkie, Rev. John (of Uphall), 2.  
 Wilkie, Matthew (of Bonnington), 2.  
 Wilkie, Thomas (Brother of Sir D. W.), 10, 102.  
 Wilkie, William (of Ormiston Hill) 2.  
 Wilkie, Rev. William (of Ratho), 2.  
*Will and Jean*, 38, 44.  
 William IV., 86, 88, 89, 92, 93.  
 Wilson, Andrew, 31.  
 Wilson, Richard, 27, 82.  
 Woodburn, W., 97.  
 Woodford, R.A., 40.  
 Wouwerman, 52.  
 Wyatt, R.A., 40.  
  
 YOUNG, MR., 69.



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EDITED BY EDWARD J. POYNTER, R.A.

DIRECTOR FOR ART: SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT.

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WITHIN the last few years an interest in art—not unfrequently genuine enough—has sprung up, which is very widespread, and which is increasing far beyond the circle of the few highly cultivated persons who at one time constituted the amateur classes. But if this interest is to be more than a fashion, a definite and systematic knowledge of art must be its foundation.

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This belief does not extend to literature, the rudiments of which, far in excess of what is required for reading, writing, and grammar, are taught in all our higher schools. It is supposed, for instance, that the intention in teaching Greek and Latin in our public schools goes beyond the mere benefit to be derived from subjects requiring regular application; the knowledge thus conferred forms at the same time a basis of the etymology of an important section of modern languages. Something of the history of classic literature is also supposed to be acquired. Most boys, on leaving school, know at least who Homer, Æschylus, Virgil, and Horace were, and what they did. They have probably learnt also how Virgil's Epic is founded on Homer's; how Æschylus led the way to Sophocles and Euripides; they have learnt from Horace the various forms of versification which he used, and whence they were derived; and much more of the same kind; in fact, unless more than the

usual amount of time has been devoted to athletics, they come away with a sufficient general acquaintance with fine literature to form their taste and to help them to pursue the subject in after-life if so inclined.

But it is doubtful whether the large majority of boys would not be puzzled by an allusion to the names of Phidias or Michelangelo. They may have heard of Raphael, because his cartoons for the Vatican tapestries are in this country, and they may have seen prints of Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, but there are very few who would come well out of an examination as to any other works of these great artists. As regards the rise, progress, culmination, and hardly contested decline of the various schools of art—GREEK, ROMAN, ITALIAN, SPANISH, GERMAN, FLEMISH, FRENCH, ENGLISH—for aught that the well-educated schoolboy knows of their history, it may be said that the great men who were the instruments of change and improvement might have existed in the Eocene period, or in the planet Mars, rather than in our own globe, and in times with whose history he is otherwise familiar.

When the English public begins to understand that a knowledge of art requires just such a foundation of definite instruction as is given to literature, they will wonder that the subject is still as foreign to the curriculum of the English schoolboy as if the Greeks of old had been as destitute of art as the barbarous nations of the north whose languages he rarely deigns to study.

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i. From *The Graphic*, July 17, 1880.

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being Orpheus), and on Byzantine work there are some interesting remarks ; and then begins the history of the Art-revival in which Pisa with Giunta, Siena with the earlier Guido and Duccio, and Florence with Cimabue and Giotto, all claim a share. Then early in the fifteenth century comes Fra Angelico of Fiesole ; and from him down to the late Venetians, Canaletto and Tiepolo, every painter of note is duly characterised according to the school to which he belonged.

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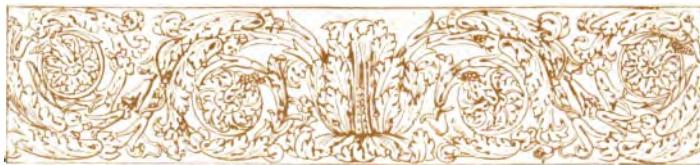
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**NOTICES OF THE PRESS.**

I. From a Review in the *Spectator*, July 5, 1879.

It is high time that some thorough and general acquaintance with the works of these mighty painters should be spread abroad, and it is also curious to think how long their names have occupied sacred niches in the world's

heart, without the presence of much popular knowledge about the collective work of their lives. . . . If the present series of biographies, which seems to be most thoroughly and tastefully edited, succeeds in responding to the wants of modest, if ardent, art-knowledge, its aim will be accomplished."

2. Reprinted from the *Times*, January 22, 1880.

" Few things in the way of small books upon great subjects, avowedly cheap and necessarily brief, have been hitherto so well done as these biographies of the Great Masters in painting. They afford just what a very large proportion of readers in these hurrying times wish to be provided with—a sort of concentrated food for the mind. The Liebigs of literature, however, especially in that of the fine arts, need no small amount of critical acumen, much experience in the art of system, and something of the bee-like instinct that guesses rightly where the honey lies. The writers of these biographies have, on the whole, succeeded in giving an excellent *aperçu* of the painters and their works, and better where they have adhered to the lives written by acknowledged specialists—such as M. Vosmaer for Rembrandt, Passavant for Raphael, and Dr. Woltmann for Holbein. The life of Holbein is by the editor, with whom the idea of such a series originated, and to whose great experience is to be attributed the very valuable copies of all the important pictures contained in the different biographies. These have been selected with great taste and judgment, and being taken generally from less well-known works by the masters, they enhance the interest and add much to the practical utility of the books. The chronological lists of the works of the masters are also very useful additions."

3. From *La Chronique des Arts*, March 20, 1880.

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